



eCOMMONS

Loyola University Chicago  
**Loyola eCommons**

---

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

---

2012

# A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and Its Relationship to Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective

Alissa Briggs

*Loyola University Chicago*

---

## Recommended Citation

Briggs, Alissa, "A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and Its Relationship to Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective" (2012). *Dissertations*. Paper 332.  
[http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/332](http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/332)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Copyright © 2012 Alissa Briggs

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A CASE STUDY EVALUATION OF SCHOOLWIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR  
SUPPORT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT WELL-BEING FROM A  
SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
  
PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

ALISSA BRIGGS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2012

Copyright by Alissa Briggs, 2012  
All rights reserved.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special acknowledgment is in order for Dr. Laura Swanlund and Dr. Kathy Pluymert, who made this dissertation possible through their guidance in designing research that would be of value and use to a school. I would also like to acknowledge the individuals at the partnering school and district who supported me throughout the research process. I am grateful to the school for welcoming me and giving me and others the opportunity to learn from the amazing work they do.

I am also grateful for the guidance of my committee – Dr. David Shriberg (chair), Dr. Pamela Fenning, Dr. Kathy Pluymert, and Dr. George Bear – throughout my research. I am grateful for the mentorship of Dr. Shriberg and the guidance he provided me in developing and merging my ideas, values, and research interests. I am also thankful for the guidance of Dr. Fenning and Dr. Pluymert in thinking through the logistics of researching schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) and for the support of Dr. Bear in thinking critically about the relationship between SWPBS, school climate, and prosocial behavior.

In addition, I deeply appreciate the support I received in data collection and analysis. With regard to data collection, I would like to thank fellow graduate students Ruth Schumacher and Arielle Schmidt for serving as focus group facilitators. I would also like to thank fellow graduate students Katie Jackson, Alison Alves, Krista Hatfield, Nicole Tompkins, and Christy Davis for assisting me in transcribing audio-recordings of

interviews and focus groups. With regard to data analysis, I would like to thank Dr. Meng-Jia Wu-Bohanon for her assistance in conducting a change-point analysis of office discipline referral data. I am also incredibly grateful for the hours Gina Bartucci and Emily Maroney spent helping me code qualitative data and for the hours Gregory Moy spent auditing my qualitative data analysis. Their assistance significantly strengthened the quality of qualitative data analysis.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family and friends. I would like to thank my parents, Clark and Martha Briggs, for providing me with a space to work and for keeping me well-fed throughout the bulk of the writing process. I would also like to thank my partner in life, Paul Duffin, for supporting and encouraging me throughout the research and writing process. Finally, I would like to thank my friends for being patient with my selfish absence as I focused on completing this body of work.

Thanks are also due to the faithful pets who kept me calm through hours of writing. First and foremost, I would like to thank my cat, Byelka Briggs, for sitting by my side (or behind me) and providing me with stress relief as I wrote at home. I would also like to thank Humphrey Torrey, a faithful golden retriever friend, for the accompaniment on many walks and play breaks during a weekend dissertation vacation at the Torrey residence. Finally, I would like to thank Mario Duffin for keeping my feet warm and providing comic relief as I wrote over winter break at the Duffin residence.

This dissertation is dedicated to mother and father, Martha and Clark Briggs, who taught me to work hard, never quit, and be thoughtful in everything I do. This dissertation is also dedicated to my partner in life, Paul Duffin, who provides me with love, inspiration, joy, comfort, and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
ABSTRACT .....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	9
Development of the Field of School Psychology .....	9
Social Justice and School Psychology .....	13
Social Justice in School Psychology Practice: The Public Health Model .....	18
Systems Change .....	21
Promoting Well-Being through a Public Health Model .....	25
School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Well-Being .....	28
Purpose of the Current Study .....	35
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	38
Design .....	38
Setting .....	39
Selection .....	39
Description .....	41
Participants .....	42
Instrumentation .....	42
Interviews .....	43
Focus Groups .....	44
Focus Group Demographic Forms .....	44
Implementation Fidelity Data .....	46
Outcome Data .....	47
Procedure .....	48
Interviews .....	48
Focus Groups with Adult Participants .....	49
Focus Groups with Student Participants .....	50
Existing Data .....	51
Analysis .....	51
Qualitative Analysis .....	51
Quantitative Analysis .....	54
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....	57
Presentation of Results .....	57
Current Implementation .....	57

Participant Demographic Data.....	58
Research Question One.....	61
Adoption and Development.....	62
Implementation.....	65
Sustained Implementation.....	70
Summary.....	85
Research Question Two.....	85
Behavior.....	86
Academic Achievement.....	101
Positive Climate.....	106
Relationships.....	107
Engagement.....	109
Summary.....	111
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	113
Overview.....	113
Research Question One.....	113
Creating Readiness.....	115
Initial Implementation.....	116
Institutionalization.....	118
Ongoing Evolution.....	121
Sustained Implementation.....	122
Summary.....	124
Research Question Two.....	125
Behavior.....	128
Academic Achievement.....	134
Engagement in School.....	135
Relationships.....	136
Positive Climate.....	137
Summary.....	138
Conclusions.....	139
Limitations and Future Directions.....	145
Data.....	145
School Research.....	145
Focus Groups.....	147
Moving Forward.....	148
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS.....	152
APPENDIX B: BULLY SURVEY.....	162
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC FORMS.....	167
APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAILS.....	170



APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORMS .....	174
APPENDIX F: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS STEPS .....	188
APPENDIX G: CODEBOOK.....	191
APPENDIX H: GLOSSARY OF TERMS .....	201
REFERENCES .....	203
VITA.....	213

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The Percent of Students who Comprise Demographic Groups by Group Category .....	41
Table 2: Green Team Member Roles, Years Experience at the School, Years Experience Implementing SWPBS, and Training in SWPBS .....	44
Table 3: Teacher and Program Assistant Participants' Years Experience at the School and Training in SWPBS.....	45
Table 4: Race/Ethnicity of Student Participants .....	46
Table 5: The Percent of Students who Rated Statements Describing Prosocial Behavior as Never or Hardly Ever True, Sometimes True, Often True, and Almost Always or Always True by Grade and Overall.....	87
Table 6: The Number of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and the Percentage of ODRs Accounted for by Tardiness.....	89
Table 7: Who Students Tell When They Experience or Witness Bullying as Indicated by the Fall 2009 Bully and Safety Survey .....	97
Table 8: The Likelihood That Students Will Help or Tell and Adult if They See Bullying as Indicated by the Percent of Students who Rated Statements Describing Intervention as Never or Hardly Ever True, Sometimes True, Often True, and Almost Always or Always True by Grade and Overall.....	97
Table 9: Signs of Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites .....	127
Table 10: Achievement of Behavioral Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites .....	133
Table 11: Achievement of Academic Well-Being at Personal and Communal Sites.....	135
Table 12: Engagement in School at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites.....	136
Table 13. Relational Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites .....	137

Table 14. Climate at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites .....	138
---	-----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percent of points achieved on <i>Schoolwide Evaluation Tool</i> (SET; Horner et al., 2004) subscales and overall over time .....	67
Figure 2: Office discipline referrals (ODRs) per day, per month, per enrollment over years of SWPBS implementation .....	88
Figure 3: Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) per day, per month, per enrollment over years of SWPBS implementation .....	90
Figure 4: The percent of students who reported experiencing or witnessing bullying by grade and year.....	96
Figure 5: The percent of students meeting and/or exceeding standards on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading and overall over time .....	103
Figure 6: The percent of students meeting and/or exceeding standards on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) in math and overall over time .....	104
Figure 7: The percent of students who rated “I like going to school” as never or hardly ever true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always or always true by grade and overall.....	110
Figure 8: The relationship between themes and phases of SWPBS implementation .....	114

## ABSTRACT

Schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is proactive, systemic, school-wide intervention aimed at preventing problem behavior and promoting prosocial behavior (Warren et al., 2003). Successful SWPBS implementation relates to reduced office discipline referrals and increased scores on tests of academic achievement (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). However, it is not clear how SWPBS relates to other indicators of student well-being (e.g., school climate, safety, relationships, prosocial behavior, and engagement in school). In order to achieve social justice in schools, multiple components of children's well-being must be promoted through proactive interventions (Prilleltensky, 2005), such as SWPBS. Because well-being as a whole encompasses many variables and individual, relational, and communal levels (Prilleltensky, 2005), SWPBS's potential impact on well-being must be critically examined so that it can be augmented if necessary.

Moreover, implementing SWPBS requires systems change, which is challenging (e.g., Bohanon et al., 2006; Lassen et al., 2006). A few studies have examined implementers' perspectives as to what relates to the success or failure of SWPBS implementation (e.g., Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Kincaid et al., 2007), but no studies have sought to understand the perspectives of multiple groups of school stakeholders on the process of developing, implementing, and sustaining SWPBS in a school that has successfully sustained implementation.

The goals of this study are to assess the relationship between SWPBS and signs of student well-being beyond, but inclusive of engagement in discipline and academic achievement, and to understand the nuances of a school's successful implementation and sustainment of SWPBS. These goals were addressed through a case study of a junior high school in a suburb of a large city that had sustained SWPBS implementation for five years. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with school stakeholders and existing implementation fidelity, discipline, academic, and survey data were gathered.

Results indicated administrative support, communication, data, and their impact on buy-in were critical to successful SWPBS implementation. These factors, in addition to embedding SWPBS features, such as the expectations, into the school culture and creating a culture of continuous improvement were critical the sustainability of SWPBS. Sustained SWPBS implementation related to a significant reduction in discipline referrals. The achievement gap as measured by the Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) closed over the course of implementation, but this could be due to other factors. The relationship between SWPBS and other indicators of well-being were mixed, suggesting the school might consider augmenting SWPBS with a school-wide social-emotional curriculum. Future research might examine the impact of SWPBS and social-emotional curricula on indicators of well-being.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The field of school psychology is in the midst of a paradigm shift. School psychology is redefining its role in schools, moving from a medical model to a public health model (Ysseldyke et al., 2006; NASP, 2010). In addition, as a field, school psychology is beginning to grapple with conceptualizing its practice within a social justice framework (Speight & Vera, 2009). Conceptualizing service delivery in terms of a public health model and adopting a social justice framework for practice are a natural pairing (Prilleltensky 2005), as a public health model requires an ecological-systems perspective, while a social justice framework requires a consideration of how school psychology practice can promote fairness and respect by addressing systems in schools that serve to hinder the fair distribution of services and oppress certain groups (Prilleltensky, 2005; Rogers & O'Bryon, 2008; Shriberg et al., 2008; Speight & Vera, 2009).

Until relatively recently, school psychology practice was mired in a medical model of service delivery that focused the school psychologist's attention on assessing, diagnosing, and treating the individual child (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The entrapment of the field in a medical model was largely due to legislation (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142, 1975), now, several reauthorizations later, known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Improvement Act (IDEIA: 2004), both accelerated and restricted the field of school psychology. This legislation gave the field legitimacy and increased the demand for school psychologists. The law gave school psychologists a pivotal role in special education eligibility decisions at a time when many students with special needs were seeking services from public schools for the first time (Merrell et al., 2006). Moreover, it propelled the field on a socially just aspiration of ensuring equity – ensuring all children had access to an appropriate education at the public expense. However, the law also defined the role of school psychologists as professionals that assesses the individual and makes recommendations based on that assessment (Merrell et al., 2006). Thus, when school psychologists desired to expand their role to focus on prevention, as opposed to diagnosing and ameliorating problems, they typically found it challenging to do so because of the amount of time they were required to dedicate to their special education placement caseloads (Strein, Hoagwood, & Cohn, 2003).

As the law shifted through reauthorizations, focusing more and more on providing services in the general education setting, so did the flexibility of school psychological service-delivery (Merrell et al., 2006). Those within the field of school psychology began to examine ways to more effectively and efficiently use their skills to meet the needs of all children. In so doing, school psychologists began to consider ways to structure systems of service-delivery in schools so as to identify and address individual and group needs while promoting the well-being of all students (Ysseldyke et al., 2006; NASP, 2010). From a social justice perspective, the field began to focus on how to distribute their talents and services so as to meet the needs of all (North, 2006).



At the turn of the century, several articles called for the field to adopt a public health model of service-delivery (e.g., Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Nastasi, 2000; Power, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). These calls were present prior to the turn of the century (see Conoley & Gutkin, 1995) but increased at the turn of the century and continued to increase throughout the early 2000s (e.g., Friedman, 2003; Nastasi, 2004; Strein et al., 2003; Weist, 2003). Researchers and policy makers within the field argued that a public health model is a more effective and efficient way for school psychologists to meet students' needs (Strein et al., 2003). Instead of constantly trying to ameliorate the never-ending and overwhelming number of individual level problems, the public health model allows for school psychologists to address contexts and systems so as to prevent costly individual level problems in the first place. Thus, the public health model frees the school psychologist to focus on promoting well-being, as opposed to addressing deficits (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995).

Then, in 2006, *Blueprint III* (Ysseldyke et al.), an influential document in outlining school psychology training and practice, called for the adoption of the public health model. According to *Blueprint III*, the public health model as applied to school psychology practice requires system supports along three levels of service-delivery: universal, targeted, and individual (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Each level of service delivery also requires systems of data collection and analysis so that children's needs can be quickly and accurately identified, addressed, and monitored (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). At the universal level, schoolwide systems of prevention are in place so as to promote the well-being of all students. For students who will be successful with moderate support,

interventions are delivered at the targeted/group level. For individual students who need significant support, interventions are designed to meet their unique needs. If the systems of prevention, intervention, and data-analysis are functioning, about 80% of children should have their needs met at the universal level, about 15% at the targeted level, and about 5% at the individual level (Ysseldyke et al., 2006).

In 2010, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) furthered the presence of the public health model as a feature of school psychologists' service-delivery. NASP published a model for service-delivery that stated school psychologists support the development and evaluation of systems to support children's well-being. In addition, NASP (2010) stated school psychologists use data-based decision-making and evidence-based interventions within these systems in order to effectively and efficiently meet students' needs. Moreover, NASP (2010) states that in order to develop and implement such systems of support, school psychologists must be skilled in consulting and collaborating with school stakeholders.

Hence, the public health model requires school psychologists to adopt an ecological-systems perspective (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The model requires school psychologists to collaborate with multiple school stakeholders to design systems to support students, and recognize and consider the complex ecology in which children live (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Multiple, intersecting layers of systems impact children's well-being, and thus interventions must address these layers (Prilleltensky, 2005).

Given that shifting towards a public health model necessitates a shift in how schools and school psychologists within them conceptualize and structure service

delivery, the literature on systems change with the field of school psychology has also expanded. For example, *Best Practices in School Psychology V* (Thomas & Grimes, 2008) devotes an entire volume and 21 chapters to systems change, whereas *Best Practices in School Psychology IV* (Thomas & Grimes, 2002) devotes only a section of one volume and eight chapters to the topic. More recently, several articles addressing systems change in schools have appeared in the school psychology literature (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Ervin, Schaughency, Goodman, McGlinchey, & Mathews, 2006; Merrell & Buchanan, 2006; Noell & Gansle, 2009; Stollar, Poth, Curtis, & Cohen, 2006).

These chapters and articles note the complexity and sensitive nature of systems change. From the literature on systems change in schools, it is clear that it takes time, must be carefully planned so as to make shifting toward the new system worth stakeholders' time and effort and addresses their needs and concerns, and have support from school leadership (Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Ervin et al., 2006; Noell & Gansle, 2009). Systems change in schools is much easier said than done, as its repeated failure to be implemented, or when implemented, to sustain, is well-documented (Senge, 1990). Moreover, educators are often critics of change, given their experience with repeated failure when it comes to such change, making their buy-in difficult to obtain (Sarason, 1996). Because systems change takes time and is delicate, a school and the school psychologist have a significant task ahead of them in working to move from a medical model of service delivery to a public health model of service delivery.

As calls for moving toward a public health model have increased, so has research on prevention-oriented systems in schools aimed at promoting well-being. One such system is schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS; Warren et al., 2003).

Schoolwide positive behavior support aims to prevent problem behavior and promote prosocial behavior by utilizing schoolwide data to structure and evaluate discipline systems (Warren et al., 2003). Instead of focusing on punishments for breaking rules, SWPBS focuses on clearly defining behavioral expectations and acknowledging students who follow those expectations (Warren et al., 2003). Research on student outcomes in schools where the SWPBS has been implemented with fidelity, as defined by the schoolwide evaluation tool (SET; Horner et al., 2004), are associated with reductions in office discipline referrals (ODRs; Bohanon et al., 2006; Ervin et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; Muscott, Mann, & Lebrun, 2008; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Simonsen et al., 2012; Spaulding et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2006), suspensions (Lassen et al., 2006; Muscott et al., 2008; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Warren et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2006), and increases in scores on high-stakes tests of academic tests of achievement (Lassen et al., 2006; Sailor et al., 2006; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Simonsen et al., 2012).

There is also some evidence that SWPBS has a positive impact on several additional factors, such as school climate, prosocial behavior, sense of safety, relationships, and engagement (Bohanon et al., 2006; Childs, Kincaid, Blase, & Wallace, 2007; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Muscott et al., 2008; Office of Special Education Programs, 2010; Spaulding et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2006). However, the evidence that SWPBS promotes prosocial behavior could use more support. Specifically,

office discipline referrals, records of overt behavior, were used to measure prosocial behavior *and* reductions in problem behavior (Muscott et al., 2008; Spaulding et al., 2010). A metric that is given only in the instance of problem behavior does not seem like a valid measure for behaviors indicative of helpfulness, cooperation, and empathy.

Research on the implementation of SWPBS also depicts challenges associated with systems change. The literature provides examples of schools that failed to reach full implementation fidelity (Bohanon et al., 2006; Lassen et al., 2006), or when they did, failed to sustain it (Warren et al., 2006). Moreover, several of the studies are case studies where researchers are involved in the implementation and only report up to three years worth of data (Bohanon et al., 2006; Lassen et al., 2006; Sailor et al., 2006; Scott & Barren, 2004; Warren et al., 2006), leading to questions as to how the school sustained SWPBS beyond three years and without the continued support of researchers.

Literature is emerging on factors associated with SWPBS sustainability. Preliminary literature on factors associated with sustained SWPBS suggest that administrative support, buy-in, the use and communication of data, regular team meetings, and time are critical to successful and sustained implementation (Doolittle 2006; Fenning et al., in preparation; Flannery et al., 2009; Kincaid et al., 2007; McIntosh et al., 2010). However, no studies have sought to understand the perspectives of multiple groups of school stakeholders in a school that has successfully sustained a high level of SWPBS implementation fidelity past the three year mark. Understanding how those impacted by such a systems change effort perceive its development and impact is

essential, especially since it is easy to silence or ignore the voice of groups with less power, such as students (Rogers & O'Bryon, 2008).

Therefore, there are two clear gaps in the literature on SWPBS: how a school can successfully implement and sustain SWPBS, and how success with implementation relates to student outcomes beyond ODRs, suspensions, and test scores. In order to achieve social justice in schools, the well-being of all children must be promoted through proactive interventions (Prilleltensky, 2005). Schoolwide positive behavior support has potential, but this potential must be critically examined so that it is clear how SWPBS can be adjusted or added to in order to promote well-being.

The present study seeks to address these gaps in the literature through a case study evaluation of a school that has been implementing SWPBS with fidelity for more than three years, as defined by the *School-Wide Evaluation Tool* (SET: Horner et al., 2004) and the *Benchmarks of Quality* (BoQ: Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007). First, the present study seeks to examine the process and outcome of implementing SWPBS at the universal level from the perspective of key school stakeholders (i.e., students, administration, faculty/staff, and universal team) via qualitative methodology. Second, the present study seeks to examine to what extent SWPBS relates to indicators of well-being by integrating multiple sources of existing data.

Two research questions will guide the case study evaluation. The first research question is: how did the school develop, implement, sustain, and refine universal behavioral supports to full implementation fidelity? The second research question is: does SWPBS relate to well-being? If so, how? Specifically, to what degree are the

following factors demonstrated and related to SPWBS implementation over time:

academic achievement, problem behavior, prosocial behavior, engagement in school, safety, victimizations, and relationships?

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Development of the Field of School Psychology**

The field of school psychology is relatively young, as one of the main legal and political forces that expanded the field was the passage of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975, just six years after NASP was established (Merrell et al., 2006). After several reauthorizations, Public Law 94-142 is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. The initial passage of special education law in 1975 expanded the field of school psychology by creating a demand for school psychologists who were trained in psychological assessment and could make special education eligibility decisions (Merrell et al., 2006). In addition, the political spirit of the law – that all children should have access to a publicly funded education alongside their same-aged peers to the greatest extent appropriate – helped define the role of school psychologists as a gatekeeper to equal educational opportunities.

Public Law 94-142 benefited the field of school psychology by giving it legitimacy and directed the goal of the field toward a socially just aspiration – providing access to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all children. However, the law challenged the field by focusing its attention on the individual child with special needs. While school psychology's sister fields (e.g.,



educational and counseling psychology) moved to considering and addressing larger systemic barriers to children's well-being (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002), school psychology practice espoused a medical model, focused on diagnosing and addressing the deficits of the individual child.

However, as the law shifted through subsequent reauthorizations to place more of an emphasis on the provision of services in the regular education setting, school psychologists began to redefine their role as a provider of equal educational opportunity. The field began to move from addressing the needs of the individual to meeting the needs of all through prevention-oriented systems such as public health model (see Nastasi, 2004). Reflecting this movement, the IDEIA (2004), which was first implemented during the 2006-2007 school year, explicitly mentions the use of Response to Intervention (RtI) to determine eligibility for services under the label of a specific learning disability.

However, RtI is more than a diagnostic method; it supports all students. The National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) defines RtI, which is based in the public health model, as a multi-tiered system to address academic and behavioral needs in order to prevent school failure. While RtI in general address multiple needs, the multi-tiered system that specifically addresses behavior needs is referred to as Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS; Turnbull et al., 2002). The multi-tiered system utilizes data for screening and progress monitoring as well as evidence-based interventions for the school as a whole (tier one), groups of students who need moderate support in order to experience school success (tier two), and individual students who need

significant support in order to experience school success (tier 3) (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Reschly & Bergstrom, 2009).

Current documents that guide school psychology training and practice state the school psychologists help develop and implement multi-tiered systems of support, such as RtI and School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS), in order to address the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of children. *Blueprint III*, the current version of a document that serves to describe and propel trends in school psychology, suggests that school psychology services should be delivered within a three-tiered, or public health model (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). The three-tiered model is described as a model where systematized prevention, intervention, and data-based decision making take place at the school-wide level (universal), with groups of students who need more support (targeted), and with individual students who need significant support (intensive) (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Similarly, the model for service-delivery published by NASP in 2010 suggests that school psychologists support the development and implementation of school-wide systems and responsive services that promote children's academic, behavioral, and social skills as well as mental health. According to NASP (2010), data-based decision-making guides service-delivery at the school-wide, targeted, and individual level.

According to Power (2008), the work of school psychologists described in *Blueprint III* (Ysseldyke et al., 2006) depicts a movement in school psychology towards creating effective and efficient systems that promote access to academic, social, and emotional well-being for all children. While NASP (2010) described its current model

for service-delivery after Power's (2008) article, it also depicts the movement Power (2008) describes. As the third blueprint for school psychology training and practice explains, school psychologists cannot achieve their goal of promoting students' academic, social, and emotional health by focusing on individuals because "the learning problems of students do not belong to students alone but to the systems charged with helping them succeed and preventing failure" (Ysseldyke et al., 2006, p. 18).

The field of school psychology's shift towards a systems perspective in conceptualizing how to meet the diverse needs of all students in a school setting makes a social justice framework for school psychology practice seem like a logical next step. Indeed, the model of service delivery published by NASP (2010) now states that school psychologists promote social justice for children and families. Prior to the NASP (2010) model for service-delivery explicitly mentioning the role of school psychologists in promoting social justice, literature related to applications of social justice to psychology practice expanded markedly (see Shriberg, Wynne, Briggs, Bartucci, & Lombardo, 2011). Moreover, within the past decade, school psychology's broad sister fields – education (Shoho, Merchant, & Lugg, 2007) and psychology (Vera & Speight, 2009) – that adopted a systems perspective have also engaged in dialogue regarding the application of social justice to their work (Speight & Vera, 2009).

### **Social Justice and School Psychology**

While it may be challenging to define social justice and make sense of the dialogue surrounding the construct, it is not impossible. North (2006) proposed a nuanced model that captures the varied ideas regarding the meaning of social justice

through three interacting spheres: redistribution-recognition, sameness-difference, and macro-micro. Each sphere consists of a tension, but these tensions and the spheres they comprise are not necessarily at odds with one another. Within the redistribution-recognition sphere, redistribution reflects the fairness of the distribution of resources and recognition reflects the degree to which the dominant groups' values infiltrate institutional and cultural norms. A tension could arise within this sphere when discipline policies are restructured to focus on expected behavior so as to provide a guide for all students, but the policies may still privilege the dominant group's values. Within the sameness-difference sphere, sameness reflects the degree to which everyone is the same and deserves the same, while difference reflects the unique attributes and needs of individuals and groups. A tension could arise within this sphere when, in an effort to promote equality, the unique attributes and needs of individuals and groups are ignored. Within the macro-micro sphere, micro reflects efforts to achieve social justice at the individual level while macro reflects efforts to achieve social justice through systems change and policy. The three-tiered model may address the tension between micro and macro level interventions by streamlining support for all, some, and individual students.

North's (2006) model highlights the complex nature of achieving social justice in and from schools. Griffiths (1998) defines social justice "in schools" as practices that are part of the day-to-day running of the school that serve to uphold social justice. Discipline policies are one example. Social justice "from schools," on the other hand, focuses on how the outcomes of schooling impact the achievement of social justice in society, such as the degree to which schools ensure access to higher education, provide career

prospects, and prevent students from becoming entrapped in punitive and exclusionary discipline (Griffiths, 1998). Several authors suggest educators can promote social justice from schools by critically analyzing and addressing conditions in schools that perpetuate inequities in society (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Prilleltensky, 2011).

In order to determine what social justice might mean for school psychology, Shriberg et al. (2008) employed a Delphi technique in which they asked a panel of school psychologists who could be considered experts in cultural diversity to define social justice as it applies to the field of school psychology. The cultural diversity experts indicated that “ensuring the protection of rights and responsibilities,” defined as “working to make sure that all individuals have the same rights and receive the same services,” was the most critical to the definition of social justice as it applies to school psychology (p. 461). In terms of North’s (2006) model, redistribution and sameness appeared most critical to the definition of social justice as it applies to school psychology. Other topics noted by the cultural diversity experts as salient to the definition of social justice as it applies to school psychology were an ecological/systemic view, advocacy, and non-discriminatory practice (Shriberg et al., 2008). An ecological/systemic view was defined as, “working beyond the immediate context and thinking beyond the school to the larger impact” of education decisions (p. 461). Such a view corresponds to macro conceptions of social justice in terms of North’s (2006) model and Griffith’s (1998) conceptualization of social justice from schools. According to the cultural diversity experts, advocacy meant, “advocating for individuals or groups who have less opportunity to” advocate for themselves (Shriberg et al., 2008, p. 461), which corresponds recognition with North’s

model. Finally, non-discriminatory practice meant “promoting equity and engaging in non-discriminatory practices” (p. 461), which corresponds to the recognition-redistribution sphere within North’s model.

Shriberg et al. (2008) summarize their findings and North’s (2006) explanation of the meaning of social justice by saying that in education, social justice is associated with the idea that “all individuals and groups must be treated with fairness and respect and that all are entitled to the resources and benefits that the school has to offer” (p. 455). A recent survey of National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members confirmed the perspectives of the cultural diversity experts (Shriberg et al., 2011). Moreover, these NASP members noted that social justice was an important and relevant construct to school psychology practice. Based on the results from Shriberg and colleague’s studies, it appears that school psychologists view issues of redistribution and recognition as most salient to the definition of social justice as it applies to school psychology. One might add that connecting social justice to school psychology practice is a call to examine how systems of oppression are reproduced by schools even if school psychologists in schools aspire to treat individuals and groups with fairness and respect and ensure equity.

In addition to debating and theorizing about the definition of social justice, scholars in the fields of education and psychology in general, and recently, in the field of school psychology in particular, have discussed how to use it as a framework for practice. As Prilleltensky, Peirson, and Nelson (1997) note, a clear social justice framework is necessary so that it is clear what values are being upheld and neglected practice.

Within the field of community psychology, Prilleltensky (2001) presents a compelling model for moving from theorizing about social justice to a framework for socially just practice. According to Prilleltensky, when translating social justice in theory to socially just practice, the first thing to consider is: what should be the case? Prilleltensky suggests that this question can be answered by examining the philosophical and political discourse and popular conceptions about what would constitute a good life and a good society. Thus, a school psychologist might consider what it would look like if individuals and groups were treated with fairness and respect and had the resources and benefits that the school had to offer. After considering the ideal, Prilleltensky argues that one needs to ask: what is the current state? Thus, a school psychologist might examine outcomes for students, such as academic achievement, engagement in discipline, feelings of engagement in school, relationships with others. The next question to ask is: what is needed to bridge the gap between the ideal and reality? What is missing and what is desired in terms of human needs (Prilleltensky, 2001)? At this stage, Prilleltensky recommends conducting a needs assessment. The value of needs assessments from a social justice perspective is that they allow those in need to have voice in the change that affects them – reflecting social justice values defined by the concepts of recognition in North's (2006) model. A school psychologist might also consider existing evidence-based interventions. Finally, the last question relates to what can be done (Prilleltensky, 2001). Addressing needs will only be successful and sustainable if they can be realistically implemented.

Prilleltensky (2001) argues that interventions developed at the pragmatic stage should be transformative rather than ameliorative. Transformative interventions are preventative in nature and promote well-being by transforming systems in order to support the achievement of social justice, as opposed to simply reacting to individual concerns. The preference for transformative interventions aligns with a macro portion of the macro-micro sphere of North's (2006) model. Without attention to the larger context, similar individual cases will persistently appear. School psychology is primed to adopt a social justice framework for practice by focusing on transformative interventions as the field is moving towards the public health model of service delivery and a focus on prevention-oriented universal systems of support. The public health model focuses on considering and addressing the ecological and systemic context of people's lives and preventing problems rather than simply remediating the problems of individuals on a case-by-case basis (Rogers & O'Bryon, 2008).

### **Social Justice in School Psychology Practice:**

#### **The Public Health Model**

In the late 1990's, school psychology demonstrated that it was beginning to shift from solely ameliorative, micro approaches aimed at addressing individual problems towards transformative, macro approaches aimed at promoting well-being. A handful of articles published prior to that time (e.g., Conoley & Gutkin, 1995; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000) called for such a shift, some calling explicitly for the adoption of a public health model (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995). Consistent with Prilleltensky's (2001) call for transformative interventions, Conoley and Gutkin highlighted the



impossibility of meeting children's needs on case-by-case basis and called for school psychologists to structure systems that promote children's well-being. Conoley and Gutkin noted that their push towards school psychologists conceptualizing their service-delivery from a systems perspective was not new by referencing their prior articles from the 1980's. However, the momentum towards such a shift in conceptualizing school psychology practice seemed to increase and translate to practice at the turn of the century as school psychologists reflected on where they have been and where they wanted to go.

Two articles published in the *School Psychology Review* in 2000 (Nastasi; Sheridan & Gutkin), a commentary on these articles (Power), and one article published in the *Journal of School Psychology* in 2000 (Bradley-Johnson & Dean), call for school psychology to engage in a paradigm shift from a medical to a public health model of service delivery. The authors of the articles published at the turn of the century call for structuring systems, in collaboration with key stakeholders, so that psychological services are effective, efficient, and true to the complex ecology of students' lives in schools (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). In order to design effective and efficient services within a complex social ecology, school psychologists need to collaborate with the adults who work with the students (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). A key to making services efficient is through integrating system-wide prevention efforts into the school curriculum (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). A key to making services effective is to conceptualize them from ecological-systems perspective (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Sheridan and Gutkin explain that an ecological-systems perspective involves examining how multi-layered and interacting environments serve to support or hinder the well-being of children and changing these environments through consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders.

The calls for a shift to a public health model and thus the adoption of an ecological-systems perspective continued and intensified past the turn of the century. More and more researchers and policy makers in the field of school psychology began to advocate for a public health model and consider how it might apply to school psychology practice (Friedman, 2003; Nastasi, 2004; Strein et al., 2003; Weist 2003). Nastasi (2004) suggested that school psychologists should monitor the needs of those being served by the school, make services available to all, and provide a full continuum of services so that services are available to all based on need. In order to be consistent with the public health model, services should not only ameliorate mental health problems, but promote wellness for all. In addition, services should have an ecological focus – consider the home, community, and cultural factors – so that they are sensitive to the contexts in which children live (Nastasi, 2004). Nastasi's suggestions depict sensitivity to the multiple tensions of social justice in education described by North (2006), such as distributing services based on need (redistribution and difference, as well as macro to micro levels of intervention), promoting wellness for all (sameness), and design services so that they are sensitive to multiple and varied contexts (difference and recognition).

Signifying that the field of school psychology was ready to consider adopting such a model in thinking about service delivery in schools, the third and current blueprint

for training and practice, published by NASP two years after Nastasi's article in 2004, explicitly recommends a public health model for school psychological service-delivery (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). *Blueprint III* clearly states that the goals of service delivery through this model are to promote the academic and cognitive competence, as well as the well-being, mental health, social skills, and life competences for all students (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Then, in 2010 NASP published a model for service-delivery that states school psychologists support the prevention of school failure and the promotion of student well-being by structuring systems of support that effectively and efficiently support all students. Similar to Nastasi (2004), Ysseldyke et al. (2006) and NASP (2010) state that in order to be able to engage in this model of service delivery, school psychologists must be aware of the larger systems that impact children, engage in data-based decision-making, and implement evidence-based interventions for all, some, and individual students.

### **Systems Change**

Given that adopting a public health model would require schools to restructure their systems of service-delivery, literature within the field of school psychology regarding systems change expanded in conjunction with literature on the public health model. To demonstrate the growing legitimacy of the public health model in the field of school psychology and its corresponding focus on changing school systems to promote the well-being of children, the recent *Best Practices in School Psychology* devotes an entire volume to "systems-based service delivery" (Thomas & Grimes, 2008). The volume on systems-based service delivery includes 21 chapters, all addressing various

issues related to structuring systems to support students. Conversely, in the previous edition of *Best Practices in School Psychology*, one part of one volume was devoted to “system-level supports for intervention-oriented services,” which included eight chapters related to structuring systems to support students (Thomas & Grimes, 2002).

Regardless of the number of pages and topics covered in the two editions of *Best Practices*, the titles of the sections encompassing these chapters demonstrates a shift in thinking in the field. The most recent title, “systems-based service delivery,” clearly conceptualizes systems as something that can be structured to promote well-being, something that can be proactive and prevent problems. On the other hand, the previous title, “system-level supports for intervention-oriented services,” seems to conceptualize systems as a way to deliver services to those who are already experiencing problem. Thus, the shift is from ameliorating deficits to transforming systems to promote the academic, cognitive, social, and emotional health of students.

In addition, articles in peer-reviewed journals regarding systems change expanded (Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Ervin et al., 2006; Noell & Gansle, 2009). These articles discuss the benefits and challenges of systems change and necessary points of consideration when changing systems. Noell and Gansle discuss the ethical and pragmatic considerations involved in systems change, as well as critical features associated with buy-in and sustainability. Adelman and Taylor (1997) describe how to approach systems change through four successive steps. Ervin et al. (2006) present an example systems change, as well as and the corresponding successes and challenges in terms of building capacity for and sustaining the change.

According to Noell and Gansle (2009), ethical issues related to changing systems are who determines how systems are changed and why systems are changed. These ethical issues align with North's (2006) redistribution-recognition sphere that highlights the tension between who decides how behavior is changed (recognition) versus why systems are changed (redistribution). However, those in the system may resist changing their behavior, even if they indicate they value and see the need for change, because the current systems and habits are comfortable (Noell & Gansle, 2009). The new behavior must be more effective and efficient in order for the change to be appealing. Few individuals would shift their practices to something that was more time consuming. In addition, practitioners must feel as if their voice is heard as part of the change efforts in order to buy-in to changing their behavior. They must feel involved in and critical to the change process. Finally, in order for change to be sustained, it must be viewed as effective and efficient and it must constantly evolve through a problem-solving process.

Ervin et al. (2006) provide an example of implementing systems change in order to support four schools in adopting a public health model and discuss successes and challenges associated with the process. Their efforts reflect many of considerations that Noell and Gansle (2009) recommend. Ervin et al. (2006) helped build and collaborate with cross-disciplinary teams, ensuring that the voices of teachers and staff were represented. They helped build systems of data collection and evaluation and the adoption of the problem-solving model, so that change did not become static and met the needs of the school. They provided the staff with the resources they needed so that changing their behavior would provide to be effective and efficient.

In supporting the schools in implementing the public health model, Ervin et al. (2006) followed Adelman and Taylor's (1997) recommended steps: creating readiness, initial implementation, institutionalization, and ongoing evolution. Creating readiness involves collaborating with stakeholders to begin the problem solving process. During initial implementation, the team supports the staff in understanding and implementing practices. Formative evaluation is critical to initial implementation, as it helps in identifying and addressing barriers to effective and efficient implementation so that the systems change effort does not result in a false start. During institutionalization, systems become part of the way a school runs and are sustained. Formative evaluation is also critical at this stage so that threats to sustainability can be identified and addressed. Finally, ongoing evolution occurs when the system is sustained. Ongoing data collection and problem-solving is still critical during ongoing evolution, as no system is static or perfect (Adelman & Taylor, 1997).

When implementing a public health model in four elementary schools using Adelman and Taylor's (1997) suggested steps, Ervin et al. (2006) found that students' performance in reading improved and their involvement in punitive discipline decreased. The authors also described lessons learned relating to the implementation and sustainment of systems change in schools. One lesson learned was that one must consider the school's unique needs and preferences. Another lesson learned mirrors the recommendations outlined by Noell and Gansle (2009); efforts must be accepted by school stakeholders and these stakeholders must feel supported and heard by their leadership (Ervin et al., 2006). A clear and final lesson that was systems change takes

time. Ervin et al. worked with schools in implementing systems change over a period of five years. While it may seem important for schools to adopt a public health model, several factors must be considered and several steps must be taken over a period of years in order for schools to make the transition from systems based on a medical model to systems based on a public health model.

### **Promoting Well-Being through a Public Health Model**

The aforementioned literature suggests schools are engaging in the process of changing their systems to align with a public health model and the field of school psychology is conceptualizing a social justice framework. How can these movements work together to promote children's well-being? Prilleltensky (2005) presents a model for promoting well-being through a public health model with the guidance of a social justice framework. In his model, well-being consists of sites, signs, sources, and strategies. Sites refer to where well-being is located (i.e., individual, relationships, and community). Signs refer to how well-being is manifested at a site. Sources – which can be multiple and interacting – refer to what promoted well-being. Finally, strategies refer to prevention and intervention efforts aimed at promoting well-being.

Based on Prilleltensky's (2005) model, a sign of well-being at the relational site could be students indicating they have positive relationships with their teachers. A source of such relationships could be a positive school climate (LeBlanc, Swisher, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2008) in which there are low rates of problem behavior (Battistich & Hom, 1997). A proactive strategy to reduce rates of problem behavior by increasing positive

interactions between teachers and students through the use of positive reinforcement of explicit expectations is SWPBS (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

However, whether or not SWPBS promotes other aspects of well-being is an important question, as promoting one aspect of well-being while ignoring others does not suffice. Prilleltensky (2005) argues that in order to be successful, strategies should address each site, sign, and source. He would argue it is important to consider whether systemic, proactive strategies, such as SWPBS, are sufficient to promote well-being as a whole, and if not, what else needs to be in place. Furthermore, it is important to consider whether or not strategies such as SWPBS promote social justice from a critical perspective, so that they do not serve to recreate oppression by promoting and enforcing dominant group's values or ignoring policies that disproportionately disadvantage certain populations.

The main sign of well-being upon which schools are assessed is high-stakes standardized test scores. Standardized test scores, such as the Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT), are used as indicators of individual and collective academic achievement. However, Prilleltensky's (2005) model suggests schools must do much more than address reading, writing, and arithmetic in order to promote academic achievement. Schools will need to address individual, relational, and collective well-being as impacted by a multitude of factors and measured in multiple different ways.

The necessary complexity of interventions is reflected in the complex relationships between multiple constructs at the individual, relational, and collective level that impact a child's experience in school and their ultimate achievement in school. For



example, student behavior is related to multiple interrelated signs of well-being at multiple sites. Students' sense of community at school is negatively associated with drug use, delinquent behaviors, and victimization (Battistich & Hom, 1997). Teacher reports of student problem behavior partially predict negative relationships between students and teachers (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2007). On the other hand, prosocial behavior – behavior that reflects empathy, helpfulness, and cooperation – relates to positive relationships with peers and teachers (Bear, Manning, & Izard, 2003). Teacher-student relationship quality predicts academic achievement (Murray, 2009). Moreover, positive teacher-student relationships relate to engagement in school, which mediates the relationship between these relationships and achievement (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Engagement in school is also uniquely positively predicted by academic achievement and social support and negatively predicted by aggressive behavior (Perdue et al., 2009). Indeed, perceptions of victimization relate to lower levels of engagement in school and academic achievement (Ripski & Gregory, 2009). In sum, communal, relational, and individual signs of well-being, including academic achievement, are interrelated.

The aforementioned examples depict how signs of well-being – behavior (positive and negative), relationships, academic achievement, engagement in school, and violence (or lack thereof) – are all related to each other in complex ways and impacted at different sites (i.e., individual, relational, and communal). The interrelation of these signs of well-being at multiple sites is not surprising given that students act on their individual, relational, and communal environments and these environments act on and respond to the actions of students. Promoting all of these signs of well-being at multiple sites will likely

prove the most fruitful for students' well-being as they are all important, interrelated pieces of a larger whole (Prilleltensky, 2005). School psychologists must work with schools to develop proactive strategies to address well-being and data systems to monitor the multiple signs of well-being in order to inform the further development and refinement of these strategies.

### **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Well-Being**

One strategy that has promise in addressing these multiple signs of well-being at multiple sites is school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS). School-wide positive behavior support is based on the public health model, and thus is a proactive approach that targets the school as a whole, groups of students, and individual students. The goal of SWPBS is to promote student well-being by reducing problem behavior and promoting positive school climate (Warren et al., 2003).

Warren et al. (2003) explain that the aim of SWPBS is to move from punitive practices that serve to exclude students from school (e.g., ODRs, which can lead to suspensions and expulsions) to supportive practices through building positive relationships by teaching and positively reinforcing behavioral expectations. The goal of SWPBS is to prevent problem behavior and thus the need for punitive discipline (Warren et al., 2003). Lassen et al. (2006) explain that promoting prosocial behavior, establishing clear expectations, and utilizing behavior management techniques, such as the use of positive reinforcement, are more effective in managing student behavior than the traditional approach of increasing the number and intensity of punitive disciplinary procedures (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Utey, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002).

Carr (2007) explains that the focus of SWPBS must be on enhancing skills and creating systems that promote well-being, rather than focusing on problem behaviors that impede well-being. The philosophy behind positive behavior support (PBS) is that school contexts must be designed to foster a supportive environment that promotes well-being for all students. Accordingly, SWPBS is a strategy aimed at the communal site of well-being and is designed to address behavioral signs of well-being. However, proponents of SWPBS recognize that by addressing this particular site and sign, and by providing a continuum of supports, relational and individual sites and signs of well-being will also be impacted.

Since it is based on the public health model, SWPBS has three levels of support, universal, group, and individual (Turnbull et al., 2002). The universal level will be the focus of the present study since structuring proactive systems is a more recent trend in the field of school psychology and is the foundation upon which group and individual levels of support are built. Traditionally, at the universal level, three to five positive expectations are developed and taught to all students for all locations within the school, students are acknowledged for following these expectations through a positive reinforcement system, and progress towards reductions problem behavior is evaluated and monitored by examining patterns in ODRs (Sugai et al., 2000).

Systems to support the development and implementation of practices, as well as data collection and analysis, are built by a team that is representative of school staff, administrators, and other stakeholders (Warren et al., 2006). Warren et al. cite the importance of having a representative team in ensuring that systems and practices

developed represent the needs of the school. In addition, Lewis and Sugai (1999) note that the team needs to meet regularly to review data, plan, and have consistent communication with the school as a whole so as to constantly be aware of needs and have a plan to address them. These recommendations mirror the recommendations of Noell and Gansle (2009), the work of Ervin et al. (2006), and the systems change process outlined by Adelman and Taylor (1997).

As the aforementioned systems change literature demonstrates, implementing SWPBS – a proactive intervention that requires schools to change, modify, and/or adopt systems (e.g., data and discipline systems) – is not without its challenges. Competing school policies, such as zero tolerance, can result in its failure (Warren et al., 2006). If school stakeholders do not understand or buy into SWPBS, or if they are not properly trained in its practices, it will either not reach full implementation, or, if it does, it will not be sustained (Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Warren et al., 2003). In addition, if SWPBS is just one more initiative on the school's plate, if it is not effectively integrated with other systems and interventions that are already in place, it is likely to be viewed as overwhelming and become unsustainable (McIntosh et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2003). Finally, if the team that supports SPWBS implementation is dysfunctional or becomes dysfunctional (e.g., one member does all the work, team members do not have time to meet), SWPBS will also become dysfunctional (Warren et al., 2003). These challenges are reflected in the recommendations outlined by Noell and Gansle (2009) regarding building and sustaining systems change.

When the challenges associated with systems change are addressed and overcome and SWPBS is implemented with fidelity, it relates to desired student outcomes. The literature is replete with examples of how SPWBS relates to reductions in problem behavior, both observed (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005) and as indicated by ODRs (Bohanon et al., 2006; Ervin et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; Muscott et al., 2008; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Simonsen et al., 2012; Spaulding et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2006). There is also evidence that it relates to reductions in exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions (Lassen et al., 2006; Muscott et al., 2008; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Warren et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2006).

Overall reductions in time spent engaged in punitive disciplinary procedures gives staff more time to support the academic growth of students and students more time to learn. Indeed, several studies have depicted a relationship between SWPBS implementation and increased academic achievement. Scott and Barrett (2004) demonstrated that reducing problem behavior results in more in-class time for students and increased academic achievement. Other studies have demonstrated the relationship between SWPBS implementation and improved academic achievement. Sailor et al. (2006) found that higher levels of SWPBS implementation fidelity related to higher scores on achievement tests in at least one area. Similarly, Simonsen et al. (2012) found that schools that implemented SWPBS with fidelity had significantly higher ISAT math scores than schools that implemented SWPBS without fidelity. Lassen et al. (2006) found that SWPBS implementation related to increases in standardized math and reading scores. Moreover, Lassen et al. conducted a regression analysis and found a significant

relationship between student problem behavior and academic achievement, suggesting that SWPBS boosted achievement by reducing problem behavior.

While there is ample evidence that SWPBS implementation relates to reductions in problem behavior and improved academic achievement overall, most of the aforementioned studies are case studies where researchers implemented SWPBS in schools over a period of years and assessed outcomes over those years. The only exceptions are Simonsen et al. (2012) and Horner et al. (2009), and their research could use further support. Simonsen et al. acknowledge that they had limited statistical power and thus limited effect sizes given that variability across schools made it difficult to form groups. Horner et al. could not experimentally examine the impact of SWPBS on ODRs given the limited nature of non-implementing schools' ODR data.

However, Simonsen et al. (2012) and Horner et al.'s (2009) research provides some support for previous research's conclusions on the relationship between SWPBS implementation, ODRs, and academic achievement. Simonsen et al. examined differences in between schools that implemented with fidelity and those that did not, as defined by the SET (Horner et al., 2004), in Illinois across a seven-year period. They found that schools that implemented SWPBS with fidelity had significantly fewer ODRs and significantly higher math ISAT scores. Horner et al. used a randomized, wait-list controlled experimental design in order to examine the impact of SWPBS on problem behavior and academic achievement. They found that implementation related to a reduction in ODRs and that the percent of students meeting or exceeding standards increased in the treatment group, but this increase was not statistically significant. In

addition, they examined the impact of SWPBS on perceived school safety, as measured by the *School Safety Survey* (SSS: Sprague, Colvin, & Irvin, 1996). They did not find any significant differences by time for the experimental group, but found a significant increase in risk factors for the control group.

In addition, the relationship between SWPBS and other aspects of well-being need further evidence. Proponents of SWPBS argue that implementation will contribute to improved school climate, prosocial behavior, safe learning environments, and academic engagement (Childs et al., 2007; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Office of Special Education Programs, 2010), yet evidence for these arguments could be stronger. For example, Muscott et al., (2008) assert that SWPBS implementation related to an increase in prosocial behavior, but measured prosocial behavior in terms of the number of students who fell into the category of zero to one ODR, which really indicates that fewer students were engaged in problem behavior, not that students were engaged in behavior reflective of helpfulness, cooperation, and empathetic concern. Similarly, Spaulding et al. (2010) assert that SWPBS leads to an improved social-behavioral climate, but operationalized such a climate in the same manner as Muscott et al. (2008). Warren et al. (2006) do note that there were improvements in school climate, but this was based on subjective reports – not data gathered and analyzed through planned, systematic methods.

Arguments also exist in the SWPBS literature that SWPBS promotes positive relationships between students and teachers. For example, Warren et al. (2003) found that teachers felt that SWPBS practices resulted in more positive interactions between

them and their students. However, it is not clear how these teacher reports were collected and thus if they were representative of teachers in the building as a whole. Moreover, students were not asked how they felt about relationships with their teachers. From a social justice perspective, as the recipients of interventions and individuals with the least amount of power in schools, students should have a voice in how those interventions impact them.

Only a few studies have examined perspectives of SWPBS team members or stakeholders regarding the impact of SWPBS or the process of its development and implementation (Bambara et al., 2009). These perspectives are important so that current and future implementers of SWPBS can learn from the challenges experienced and recommendations provided by those in the trenches, especially given the challenges associated with implementing and sustaining systems change. One study asked SWPBS team members to list and describe barriers and facilitators to implementation of SWPBS (Kincaid et al., 2007). They found that barriers included buy-in, use of data, consistency of implementation, and time while facilitators included district, administrative, and state level support, use of data, and professional development (Kincaid et al., 2007). Another employed a survey in order to understand aspects of SPWBS implementation at the high school level from the perspective of SWPBS teams and found that a significant challenge faced by the high school SWPBS teams was securing faculty and staff support and participation (Flannery et al., 2009).

The aforementioned barriers and facilitators are consistent to challenges to successful systems change described by Noell and Gansle (2009), Ervin et al. (2006), and



Adelman and Taylor (1997). However, no published studies have sought to understand the nuances and impact of successful and sustained implementation of SWPBS from the perspective of those involved and impacted by the implementation. One unpublished study examined the perspectives of multiple stakeholders – administrators, teachers/staff members, students, SWPBS team members, national experts – using focus groups regarding barriers and facilitators to successful SWPBS implementation at the high school level (Fenning et al., in preparation). They found that stakeholders must be philosophically aligned with SWPBS practices in order to buy into them (agree that teaching a reinforcing expected behaviors was appropriate at the high school level), and that implementation would fail if the school moved forward before buy-in was achieved. However, since their focus was on the high school level and not many high schools are implementing SWPBS, the high schools in the study had not implemented and sustained SWPBS. Furthermore, their findings centered on critical factors for reaching successful implementation in high schools, not on sustained implementation or its impact.

### **Purpose of the Current Study**

While SWPBS is a promising approach to implementing a public health model in order to promote well-being, the breadth of its impact is not fully understood. Understanding the breadth of its impact is important so that other proactive interventions can be developed and implemented in order to address gaps in its impact. As Prilleltensky (2005) notes, well-being needs to be addressed at multiple sites and multiple signs need to be examined.

In addition, the literature does not provide a clear understanding of the perspectives of all stakeholders involved and impacted by SWPBS, nor does it provide a clear picture of what it would take for a school to successfully implement and sustain SWPBS over time without the support of researchers. Literature suggests administrative support, the degree to which SWPBS is viewed as effective and efficient, and ongoing data-based problem-solving are critical, but this research could use further illustration (Doolittle, 2006; McIntosh et al., 2010). Given the complexities of systems change (Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Ervin et al., 2006; Noell & Gansle, 2009), an understanding of how a school succeeds in such change from the perspective of those involved in the change is essential so that other schools can learn and grow from the lessons of schools like theirs. Moreover, from a social justice framework, it is important to hear the voice of all of those impacted by an intervention so as to ensure that groups with less power have the ability to express their perspectives and have them considered [i.e., recognition in North's (2006) model].

First, the present study seeks to examine the process and outcome of implementing SWPBS at the universal level from the perspective of key school stakeholders (i.e., students, administration, universal team) at a school that has successfully implemented and sustained SWPBS at the universal level beyond three years, as defined by the *School-Wide Evaluation Tool* (SET: Horner et al., 2004) and the *Benchmarks of Quality* (BoQ: Cohen et al., 2007). Second, the present study seeks to examine to what extent SWPBS relates to aspects of well-being beyond, but inclusive of,

reductions in punitive and exclusionary discipline and increased test scores. The study will examine factors by integrating multiple sources of existing data.

Existing data will be used for two reasons. First, the school is unique in its wealth of existing data sources that allow for the examination of the relationship between SWPBS implementation and multiple signs of well-being over time. Second and more importantly, by already collecting data on certain signs of well-being at the individual, relational, and collective, level, the school demonstrates that these aspects of well-being are important and relevant to its context and thus those involved in change efforts will likely use data on these factors in order to inform the development of future systems and interventions (e.g., Noell & Gansle, 2009). Aspects of well-being upon which the school collects data, in some cases using multiple sources of data that can be integrated, are problem behavior, prosocial behavior, academic achievement, engagement in school, relationships, feelings of safety, and victimization (i.e., bullying).

The gaps in the literature will be addressed by two research questions. The first research question is: how did the school develop, implement, sustain, and refine universal behavioral supports? The second research question is: does SWPBS relate to well-being? If so, how? Specifically, to what degree are the following factors demonstrated and related to SPWBS implementation over time: academic achievement, problem behavior, prosocial behavior, engagement in school, safety, victimizations, and relationships?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Design**

In order to understand the nuances of how universal behavior support systems and practices are developed, implemented, and sustained, and how they in turn impact the well-being of students, a case study design will be used. A case study design allows for an understanding of the complexities involved in building, sustaining, and refining systems and practices in schools, as well as how these systems and practices impact the personal, relational, and collective aspects of a student's well-being (Evans, Hanlin, & Prilleltensky, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2005).

The present case study utilizes qualitative methodology primarily, with the incorporation of quantitative data when available. Qualitative data are used to describe both the process of developing, implementing, sustaining, and refining systems designed to support students behaviorally at the universal level and how these may or may not relate to student outcomes. Quantitative data are used to indicate implementation fidelity and verify, explain, and/or expand upon participants' descriptions student outcomes when possible.

## **Setting**

### **Selection**

The researcher sought a setting that met three criteria: the school would find value and use in the research, the school valued student perspectives, and the school had been implementing SWPBS with fidelity for at least two to three years. The researcher adopted principles from program evaluation and action research (Alkin & Christie, 2004; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2009) that suggest research must be of value and use to the participant(s). These principles align with a social justice perspective, which places a priority on minimizing imbalances in power and benefit (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Second, social justice principles suggest that those with the least power are best suited to define and describe their experiences, and that when those with the least power speak social justice advocates ensure their words lead to action (Clare, 2009). Therefore, the researcher felt it critical that the school valued student perspectives. Thus, the researcher desired indication that the school would value and use the results, particularly those depicting students' voice, to further refine and/or develop SWPBS. Finally, the school needed to be at SWPBS implementation integrity for several years in order to examine the process of developing, implementing, and sustaining SPWBS practices and the relationship to SWPBS implementation to well-being over time.

In order to identify such a school, the researcher contacted two district level officials with whom she had prior relationships, described her research goals, and they provided guidance as to schools that were potential research partners. One district required the submission of a proposal prior to contacting the school, and the district

rejected the proposal. With the other district, the researcher worked with the district level official and a school psychologist at the school of interest to develop a research proposal that would be useful and feasible for this school and meet the research goals. Once the researcher developed the proposal and the district official and school psychologist accepted it as feasible and helpful, they gave the researcher permission to discuss a research partnership with the principal. The school psychologist arranged the meeting and the school psychologist and the researcher presented the proposal to the principal. The principal indicated the research would be of value and use to the school.

The principal felt a synthesis of the school's existing data, in addition to a qualitative description of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the development, implementation, and impact of SWPBS would be of value and use to the school. The principal also indicated a desire to hear students' thoughts and opinions relating to SWPBS. The researcher felt confident the school would find value in and use the research findings because the principal and school psychologist depicted a school culture that thrived on data and a drive to improve. In addition, the school indicated they valued student perspectives. For example, the school developed a data tool to measure student perceptions of safety and bullying so that they could use these data to evaluate and refine how they address these concerns.

In addition, data collection would take place when the school had been implementing SWPBS with fidelity for four and a half years, as indicated by the *School-wide Evaluation Tool* (SET: Horner et al., 2004) and the *Benchmarks of Quality* (BoQ: Cohen et al., 2007). Implementation fidelity according to the SET is a summary score of

at least 80% across all seven subscales and a summary score of at least 80% on the subscale that assesses the teaching of school-wide behavioral expectations, known as “80/80” (Horner et al., 2004). Implementation fidelity according to the BoQ is a summary score of 70% (Cohen et al., 2007). The school first achieved implementation fidelity in the spring of 2007 with a score of 88/80, reached a score of 99/98 in the spring of 2008, and had a score of 100/100 by the fall of 2011 (see Figure 1). In the springs of 2009 and 2010, respectively, the school achieved a 100% and a 98% on the BoQ.

### Description

The school is a junior high school in a large suburb of a large Midwestern city that enrolls about 550 seventh and eighth grade students and has a student to teacher ratio of 13.5:1. Because it is the only school under investigation, it will be referred to simply as “the school.” Please see Table 1 for school demographic data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The data presented is from the 2009-2010 school year, as this is the most recent data available through NCES.

Table 1. The Percent of Students who Comprise Demographic Groups by Group Category

Category	Percent per Group			
Grade	7	8		
	50.5%	49.5%		
Gender	Male	Female		
	52%	48%		
Race/Ethnicity	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian/ Pacific Islander
	60%	30%	2%	8%

## **Participants**

Specific members of the school recruited for participation include team members charged with implementing SWPBS at the universal level (referred to by the school as the “green team”), current and past green team leaders, the principal, certified (teachers) and non-certified (classroom assistants, called “program assistants” by the school) staff, and students. The green team includes representation from administrators, parents, teachers, and program assistants. Teachers comprise 77% of the green team. There are three current and past green team leaders. Two are teachers and one is a member of the support staff (e.g., counselors, social workers, school psychologists). The researcher solicited certified staff and student participation from both grade levels.

## **Instrumentation**

Interviews, focus groups, and existing data were used to investigate the process of developing and implementing SWPBS and the relationship between SWPBS implementation and student well-being. Indicators of well-being assessed through the present study include a sense of safety, the absence of negative behavior and presence of prosocial behavior, academic success, positive relationships, a positive climate, and engagement in school. These indicators are not mutually exclusive, but are unique enough to warrant separate attention.

Adult participants were asked about the planning, implementation, refinement, and sustainment of SWPBS. They were also asked how they would define and describe SWPBS implementation at their school in order to get a sense of how SWPBS implementation was viewed and understood. All participants were asked about



perceptions of student well-being, as well as the relationship between SWPBS and student well-being (see Appendix A for interview and focus group protocols). Existing data collected included implementation fidelity data, academic and behavior data, and survey data on safety and bullying (see Appendix B for survey questions).

### **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and three green team leaders, one current and two past. These individuals comprise the SWPBS leadership group as they are the stewards of SWPBS implementation. The principal and the two past green team leaders were involved in the initial development and implementation of SWPBS, and thus have unique perspectives as to the entire history of implementation. The principal and current green team leaders have unique perspectives as to leading the school through refining and sustaining SWPBS [see Table 2 for an indication of the experience leadership participants have with the school, SWPBS, and their role (for the green team leaders)]. While the principal, the current green team leader, and a past green team leader are all members of the green team, they were interviewed individually because the principal's position of authority could influence the responses of all participations and the green team leaders' positions of authority could influence the responses of green team members.

Table 2. Green Team Member Roles, Years Experience at the School, Years Experience Implementing SWPBS, and Training in SWPBS

Group	#	Years at School	Training Source	Years Implementing	Role
Green Team	1	5-10	school	2	P.A.
	2	0-5	school	2	teacher
	3	0-5	school	4	teacher
	4	0-5	state network	4	teacher
	5	0-5	school	4	teacher
	6	0-5	school	4	teacher
Green Team Leader	1	10+	state network	initial implementer	
	2	10+	state network	initial implementer	
	3	5-10	state network	4	
Principal		5-10	state network	initial implementer	

*Note.* “P.A.” indicates “program assistant.” For training source, “school” indicates the participant was trained through school communication and “state network” indicates the participant was trained by the state positive behavioral support technical assistance network.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with the green team, teachers, program assistants, and students by grade. The green team was selected as a participant group because its members have unique perspectives as to the process of developing, implementing, sustaining, and refining SWPBS given that they lead these efforts. Teachers and program assistants have unique perspectives as to how they have been led in the implementation of SWPBS. Teachers and program assistants were not grouped together in case their roles related to perspectives they expressed. Students have unique perspectives as to their own well-being and how features of SWPBS relate to their well-being.

### Focus Group Demographic Forms

Each member of each focus group was asked to provide demographic information. See Appendix C for the demographic forms and Tables 2, 3, and 4 for

demographic data. Green team, teacher, and program assistant participants were asked to indicate how long they worked for the school and their role in the school in order to get a sense of their experience with the school, and thus SWPBS, and if their role related to their perspectives. Students were asked to indicate their race/ethnicity in order to facilitate an understanding of how the focus groups represented the population of students at the school. Student demographic data was not associated with participant numbers.

Table 3. Teacher and Program Assistant Participants' Years Experience at the School and Training in SWPBS

Group	#	Years at School	Training in SWPBS
Teacher	1	0-5	school
	2	10+	school
	3	5-10	school
	4	10+	state network
	5	5-10	state network
	7	10+	school
	8	10+	training at previous school
	9	5-10	state network
	11	0-5	school
	12	0-5	school
	13	0-5	state network
	4	0-5	educator training
Program assistant	5	0-5	school
	6	10+	school
	7	5-10	school
	8	5-10	school

*Note.* For training source, “school” indicates the participant was trained through school communication and “state network” indicates the participant was trained by the state positive behavioral support technical assistance network.

Table 4. Race/Ethnicity of Student Participants

	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic	Multi-racial
7 <sup>th</sup>	1	1	1
8 <sup>th</sup>	2	3	

### Implementation Fidelity Data

**School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET).** The school used the SET (Horner et al., 2004) in the spring of 2007 and 2008 to assess implementation fidelity. The researcher also assessed implementation fidelity in the fall of 2010 using the same tool so that implementation fidelity scores at the point of data collection could be compared to initial implementation fidelity scores. The SET is a validated and commonly used implemented fidelity tool (Cohen et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2004). The SET involves observation, interviews, and a review of school products. It is conducted and scored by an outside, trained, evaluator (Horner et al., 2004). The researcher is trained in the use of the SET. Data obtained are scored using 28 items, which are then organized into seven subscales that assess the following seven key features of SWPBS: the definition of school-wide behavioral expectations, the teaching of behavioral expectations, the development and implementation of a system for acknowledgements, the development and implementation of a continuum of consequences for problem behavior, the monitoring of data relating to student behavior and the use of this data for decision-making, administrative support for and involvement in the implementation of SWPBS, and school district support (Horner et

al., 2004). A copy of the SET can be found at the following website:

[http://www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation\\_tools.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation_tools.aspx).

**Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ).** After demonstrating implementation fidelity using the SET for two years, the school switched to using the BoQ (Cohen et al., 2007) to measure implementation fidelity. Like the SET, the BoQ is a commonly used and validated tool (Cohen et al., 2007), but does not require administration by outside evaluators and thus more user-friendly for the school. The BoQ is a self-assessment rating scale completed by the team charged with implementing SWPBS (Cohen et al., 2007). The BoQ consists of 53 items organized into the following ten critical elements of SPWBS implementation (Lewis & Sugai, 1999): the PBS team, faculty commitment, effective discipline procedures, data entry, expectations and rules, acknowledgement system, lesson plans, implementation plans, crisis plans, and evaluation (Cohen et al., 2007). A copy of the BoQ can be found at the following website:

[http://www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation\\_tools.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation_tools.aspx).

### **Outcome Data**

**Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs).** In order to assess student behavior, the school uses the School-Wide Information System, SWIS™, (ECS, © 2010). The SWIS™ is a web-based information system commonly used to track behavior data collected through referrals to the office for problem behavior (ODRs) in schools implementing SWPBS (Irvin et al., 2006). SWIS™ allows schools to examine data on the number of ODRs generated by date, behavior, location, time of day, and student.

**Bully Survey.** The school first developed and administered the bully survey in the fall of 2009 in order to assess the incidence and prevalence of bullying and if students felt safe. The school administered a simplified version in the fall of 2010 (see Appendix B for both versions).

**Academic and Attendance Data.** The percent of students meeting and exceeding standards on the Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) overall and by subgroup for reading and math over time was gathered through the Illinois Interactive Report Card (<http://iirc.niu.edu/>). The overall rate of attendance and enrollment by year were also gathered through this site. Attendance data by student over time was not available.

## **Procedure**

### **Interviews**

Leadership members were recruited via email (please see Appendix D for the recruitment email). Interviews were in a private office, audio-recorded, and transcribed by the researcher or a trained graduate student with experience in transcription. All were given the option to consent to participation but not audio-recording, and all consented to audio-recording. Interviewees were reminded not to mention the name of the school, district, or names of members of the school so as to protect their and others' confidentiality (see Appendix E for the consent form and Table 2 for demographic characteristics of leadership participants).

### **Focus Groups with Adult Participants**

Green team members, teachers, and program assistants were recruited by participant group via an email (please see Appendix D for the recruitment emails). A time and place for each focus group was proposed with the guidance of the principal and green team leaders, who have knowledge of staff schedules. All who agreed to participation were selected, which were six green team members, eleven teachers, and five program assistants. Focus groups took place in an empty classroom with the door closed and were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher or a trained graduate student with experience in transcription. All were given the option to consent to participation but not audio-recording, and all consented to audio-recording (please see Appendix E for the consent form).

Participants were handed a consent form as they entered the room and the moderator (researcher) reviewed the consent form once all arrived. Once consent forms were signed, the facilitator (trained graduate student assistant) gathered signed consent forms and passed out participant numbers. The moderator asked that they refer to themselves and others by number in order to protect their identities. Participants were reminded not to mention the name of the school, district, or names of members of the school so as to protect their and others' confidentiality. Then, the facilitator passed out demographic forms and collected them when they were completed. The focus group began once demographic forms were completed (please see Tables 2 and 3 for demographic characteristics of adult participants). The moderator asked questions and the facilitator took notes.

### **Focus Groups with Student Participants**

The school psychologist assisted the researcher in randomly selecting 25 students from each grade to solicit for participation by assigning each student a number and selecting students using a table of random numbers. Students who could not fully participate due to cognitive disabilities or limited English proficiency were excluded. For the 50 randomly selected students, an English and Spanish version of a letter and consent form explaining the study and requesting parent or guardian consent for their child's participation was mailed home along with a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher at her university address that could be used to return a signed form. Parents had the option to consent to participation and audio-recording or participation only (please see Appendix E for the English version of the letter and consent form).

Eight parents or guardians consented to their child's participation in time for the focus groups to take place in the fall of 2010, three from the seventh grade and five from the eighth grade. All students whose parents or guardians signed and returned a consent form in time for the focus groups to take place were selected for participation. The focus groups occurred in a private conference room during a time selected by the principal in order to minimize academic classes missed due to participation. The seventh grade focus group was audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. A parent or guardian of an eighth grade student did not consent to audio-recording and thus a facilitator took detailed notes during the eighth grade focus group in order to capture participants' responses.



Once students arrived, the moderator explained the procedures, ground rules for participation, and asked for verbal assent to participation and audio-recording, if applicable. All students assented to participation (please see Appendix A for the student focus group protocol, which includes the assent script). Then, the facilitator passed out name cards with participant numbers. The moderator instructed students to refer to themselves and others by number in order to protect their identities. The moderator also instructed students to not mention the name of the school, district, or names of members of the school so as to protect their and others' confidentiality. The moderator then passed out the student demographic form, which asked students to indicate their race/ethnicity. See Table 4 for the race/ethnicity of student participants. Once demographic forms were completed, the focus group began. The moderator asked questions and probed for more information and the facilitator took notes.

### **Existing Data**

The researcher worked with the green team leader and school psychologist to collect existing implementation fidelity (SET and BoQ) and bully survey data. The researcher worked with a district administrator in order to collect ODR data in a spreadsheet with student names removed. All student level data was identified by student identification number.

## **Analysis**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Interview and focus group data were analyzed inductively using steps outlined in Creswell (2009) and Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) (see Appendix F for the list of

steps used to analyze qualitative data). After transcription, the researcher read transcripts to understand the data in general. Then, the researcher read through the transcripts again and took notes on topics discussed. From this, themes and subthemes emerged. The researcher then checked to ensure at least three participants discussed themes and subthemes prior to including them in the codebook (Creswell, 2009). The codebook defined each theme and subtheme by the topics participants discussed (see Appendix G).

The researcher then used the codebook to code the transcripts, revising definitions for codes as necessary. Once the researcher felt that the codebook was a reliable tool for categorizing data, the researcher enlisted a volunteer coder with experience in qualitative data analysis in order to support the reliability of the coding process. The researcher trained the coder in the codebook by coding part of a student transcript, a teacher transcript, and green team leader transcript with the coder. See Appendix G for instructions associated with the codebook. The researcher and the volunteer coded separately and came together to discuss discrepancies in coding. At this point, it became apparent that some themes needed further definition, one theme could be merged with another, and that some topics categorized under one theme needed to be categorized under another. The codebook was revised and both coders coded the majority of transcripts separately again and came together to discuss discrepancies.

The coders were at 92% agreement prior to resolving discrepancies and reached 100% agreement when resolving discrepancies. Agreement was defined as that percent of codes the researcher and coder agreed upon, including both the codes they agreed did not apply and the codes they agreed did apply. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend

at least 80% agreement. The lowest agreement for a transcript pre-resolution was 87%. Because the volunteer coder was unable to code all transcripts with the researcher using the second codebook due to a schedule conflict, a second volunteer coder was enlisted and trained. Prior to resolving discrepancies the researcher and volunteer two were at 86% agreement and reached 100% agreement after resolving discrepancies. The lowest agreement for a transcript pre-resolution was 84%.

After the researcher coded transcripts with volunteer coders, an auditor with experience in qualitative research reviewed the codebook and the consensus version of the coding. The auditor indicated the codebook was a reliable tool and disagreed with less than one percent of the coding for all transcripts. Most auditor suggestions regarding coding transcripts were accepted. However, the auditor did make one suggestion regarding themes. S/he thought a larger theme describing the school's drive for continuous improvement might be useful. The researcher agreed that the data indicated this theme, but felt that instead of coding data using this theme it would be more useful to describe how themes related to create this larger theme in the cross-analysis phase.

After the transcripts were coded, the researcher read through statements coded under each theme for each participant group and summarized these statements into abstracts by participant group (Hill et al., 1997). The auditor reviewed the statements and abstracts and indicated that they captured the data. Then, in the cross-analysis stage, the researcher reviewed the abstracts and examined how themes related to one another and developed categories to describe their relationship (Hill et al., 1997). At this point, the

researcher wrote the narrative describing participants' perspectives by research question, integrating quantitative data where applicable.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

**Implementation Fidelity.** The degree of implementation fidelity as indicated by the SET (Horner et al., 2004) and BoQ (Cohen et al., 2007) are presented in terms of percentages. The percent achievement of each subscale and the percent achievement overall are presented for each year implementation fidelity data was collected, in order to examine implementation fidelity over time.

**Academic Achievement.** The percent of students meeting and meeting/exceeding standards on the ISAT are reported for all years that they are available on the Illinois Interactive Report Card (<http://iirc.niu.edu/>). These data are reported for the school as whole, by race/ethnicity, by free or reduced lunch status, and for students with limited English proficiency (LEP) and disabilities.

**Problem Behavior.** Office discipline referrals (ODRs) are reported by day, month, and enrollment so that ODRs are comparable across months and years. Attendance does not factor in to the number of ODRs reported because attendance was stable at 96% across years of SWPBS implementation. It was not possible to report ODR data by demographic group because these data do not have common identifiers besides student names. A change-point analysis (Siegel & Castellan, 1998) was conducted to determine if and when significant reductions in the number of ODRs occurred.

**Prosocial Behavior.** The bully survey administered in the fall of 2009 has several items that could be considered indicators of prosocial behavior. The survey asked

students who witnessed bullying if they did any of the following: asked a kid who was left out to join their group, helped the kid come up with ideas about how to handle the problem, stood up to the kid who was bullying the other kid, or talked to the kid about how he/she felt. The survey also asked students to rate items indicating prosocial behavior, such as: “if someone is alone at lunch, others will invite him/her to join in,” “when I am upset, other kids try to comfort me or cheer me up,” “the other kids help if they see someone being bullied or picked on,” “kids tell adults at school when other kids are being bullied and picked on,” and “kids at this school encourage other kids to do the best they can at their schoolwork.” These data are presented in terms of the percent of students by grade and overall who indicated these statements were never or hardly true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always or always true.

**Safety.** The 2009 and 2010 bully surveys asked if students feel safe. These data are presented in terms of the percent of students who indicate they feel safe. In addition, the 2009 bully survey asks students to rate the truth of the following statement: I am afraid to go to school. The percent of students who indicated this was never or hardly true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always or always true are presented by grade and overall.

**Victimization.** The 2009 and 2010 bully surveys asked students if they witnessed or experienced bullying. These data are presented in terms of the percent of students indicated they witnessed or experienced bullying. Furthermore, the 2009 data is available by grade, and thus the percent of seventh and eighth grade students who indicated they witnessed or experienced bullying is presented.

**Engagement in School.** The 2009 bully survey asked students to rate the truth of the statement “I like going to school.” Students’ response to this statement is indicated by the percent of students overall and by grade who felt that the statement was never or hardly true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always or always true.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### **Presentation of Results**

The presentation of results aligns with the research questions. The results of the qualitative data analysis structure the answers to the research questions. The results of quantitative data, when available, are embedded in the presentation of qualitative results. Background information is provided prior to answering the research questions. Background information includes a description of current implementation of school-wide positive behavioral support (SWPBS) at the universal, or tier one, level at the school at the time of data collection and participant demographic data that can serve to contextualize participant responses. The description of SWPBS implementation at the time of data collection is based on participant responses to focus group questions and the researcher's experience working with the school throughout the research process (please refer to Appendix H for a definition of terms associated with SWPBS implementation at the school; the order of terms in Appendix H corresponds to their order in text).

#### **Current Implementation**

The school takes several steps to ensure that stakeholders learn about SWPBS prior to or at the beginning of the year. Incoming seventh grade students and their parents are introduced to SWPBS at sixth grade orientation. Parents are further introduced to SWPBS through handbooks, newsletters, and parent-teacher organization

meetings. School staff (teaching certified and uncertified employees) reviewed SWPBS during their August institute days. Students learn how the SWPBS system applies to them during the first two or three days of school during a “boot camp” (see Appendix H). Specifically, they visit each area of the school and learn how the school-wide expectations and apply to their behavior in each area. The school-wide expectations are the core of SWPBS implementation. These expectations are “be safe,” “be responsible,” and “be respectful.” Names for the school-wide expectations include: “the Wildcat Ways,” “core values,” and “common language.” In addition, the principal reviews SWPBS with students during an assembly at the beginning of the year.

The Wildcat Ways are communicated and taught throughout the year. In order to remind students of the expectations, the matrix (see Appendix H) defining the expectations for each location is posted throughout the school and in the student and parent handbooks. Students review the matrix at the beginning of each quarter through “kick-offs” (see Appendix H). Each month during one period of the day, which is about forty minutes, all of the teachers teach students a specific aspect of a Wildcat Way through a “cool tool” (see Appendix H). The green team designs the cool tool to address a current behavior of concern. In order to identify a behavior of concern, the green team reviews office discipline referral (ODR) data, which they track using School-Wide Information System, SWIS™ (ECS, © 2010; see Appendix H). The team also reviews teacher feedback regarding behavioral concerns.

Consequences, positive and negative, reinforce the Wildcat Ways. When students follow the Wildcat Ways, they may earn a “gotcha” (see Appendix H). Gotchas are



entered into weekly raffles for prizes, which at the time of data collection were five dollar gift certificates to area restaurants and business. When students violate a Wildcat Way, they may receive an ODR. An ODR can result in a detention, in school suspension, or out of school suspension at the school district's alternative school depending on the severity of the behavioral infraction and the frequency with which the student engages in the behavioral infraction.

In addition, students and staff participate in a school-wide celebration each quarter if students meet a behavioral goal. These goals typically entail the number of ODRs for a particular behavior being under a certain number. The green team reviews ODR data in order to select the behavior and number. School-wide celebrations take place over two periods. In the fall of 2010 they were a student versus staff soccer game and a student versus staff dodge ball game.

### **Participant Demographic Data**

A demographic survey and focus group and interview questions were used to ascertain participants' experience with the school and SWPBS, including the training they had in SWPBS. Participants' years experience at the school and training in SWPBS are presented in Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter Three. Also presented in Table 2 are the green team members' roles in the school and green team members' and leaders' years experience implementing SWPBS. All but one green team member participant were teachers. Participants cited varied years of experience at the school, years of experience implementing SWPBS, and training in SWPBS.

The principal and green team leaders one and two were involved in the initial implementation of SWPBS. The past green team leaders have worked for the school for several decades. One of the past green team leaders is still a member of the team. Green team leader three started teaching at the school at the beginning of SWPBS planning and implementation, but was not involved until year two of implementation. The principal and the green team leaders were trained by the state positive behavior support technical assistance network, which will subsequently be called the “state network” (see Appendix H). The state network also provides ongoing training and coaching for green team leaders.

None of the green team member participants were involved in initial implementation. Some became involved two years ago and some four years ago. One received training from the state network and the others received training through institute days and participation in the team. Teachers who cited training by the state network were part of the initial green team, and the initial green team members were all trained by the state network.

Teacher and program assistant participants had varied experience and training. The majority of program assistants had less than ten years of experience working at the school and received training through school institute days and communication from the principal and green team. One received training through her educator preparation.

Most participants indicated satisfaction with their training in SWPBS and an understanding of SWPBS. However, those who did not have the opportunity to sit down

and learn the school's SWPBS system prior to school starting or at the beginning of the year experienced initial confusion. For example,

... probably the first three months I did not understand what [SWPBS] was past the gotcha thing. I got a t-shirt that said "gotcha" on the back and I got a thing full of paper gotchas. ...There were three of us that were new the year that I started, and I think one of the three had worked with [SWPBS] before. So, I just kind of did some research myself and just punted. But I wish that I had done it the way thirteen did it, where you went to a training, where not necessarily the whole day, but at least when we do have new staff, have you know... maybe just sit down with the new staff for an hour and just lay it out there. (teacher 12)

Green team members two and six also expressed they had no idea what SWPBS was when they first started working at the school. Program assistant four found herself in a similar position, but fortunately had training in SWPBS through her teacher education. She explained, "...coming in I knew what it was, but no one explained it to me other than to say what the little papers were that we were supposed to hand out." She added,

...actually, when I started here last year, they gave me this shirt and I put it on in the morning and I saw gotcha and – "what's this?" So I came to school the first and I [asked], "What does 'gotcha' mean?"

However, these participants all expressed that they now know what SWPBS is and how it is implemented at their school.

### **Research Question One**

Research question one asked, "How did the school develop, implement, sustain, and refine universal behavioral supports?" Participants cited administrative support, communication, outside training and support, and data as critical to the adoption, development, implementation, and sustainment of SWPBS. They also cited the importance of administrative support, communication, and data to buy-in. Buy-in was

the critical factor in reaching and sustaining implementation fidelity. In addition, participants indicated implementation is sustained because of the school's culture of continuous improvement and because core features of SWPBS became engrained in school culture. Participants' perspectives on the development, implementation, and sustainment of SWPBS are presented below along with implementation fidelity data.

### **Adoption and Development**

The principal's desire for a different and more systemic approach to address student behavior influenced the adoption of SWPBS. As the principal described, "there was no system in place [and] there was no system of reward at school. ...People were constantly talking more of consequences than problem-solving." According to the green team leaders, the principal selected SWPBS after learning about it through the district. The principal fostered support for SWPBS before it was even introduced by communicating information. S/he talked "...about the possibility of people becoming more familiar with a problem-solving model..." and made "...sure that teachers saw the correlation between [SWPBS] and the social-emotional learning standards" (principal) implemented by the state.

Outside training and technical assistance were also critical to the adoption of SWPBS. After a year, the principal moved from building a base for systems change through communication to supporting the development of the systems he wanted introduced. The principal introduced the idea of SWPBS to one of the initial co-green team leaders, and s/he was willing to go to a state network meeting to learn more about implementing it (green team leader 1). When s/he got there, s/he realized that teams went

to these meeting, so s/he recruited a co-leader to go with her to the next one. Then, the two co-leaders and the principal assembled a green team.

Green team members were selected strategically so that the structure of the green team would foster communication with staff. Green team members represented diverse roles, grades and subjects, years of experience in the school, informal leadership roles, and thus diverse perspectives and influences. In addition, green team members represented all of the teaching teams so teaching teams had green team representation to address any questions or concerns.

Once the initial green team was assembled, they received training from the state network. Green team leader one noted their state network coach "... [was] able to come do [the training] here at the school. So we got almost like individualized unique training for our school, and so [our coach] was able to help us through... everything." With the state network's support and resources, the green team developed SWPBS systems and practices that fit their context. According to green team leader two,

We didn't reinvent the wheel, we looked at other schools' successes and what they were doing and we just kept finding what best suited us... Then we tweaked things to fit our own school. But, like I said, we didn't come up with everything ourselves, that's for sure. You know, the [state] network has so much information for you, that we pretty much were able to take things from them.

The school-wide expectations, which guide the behavior they teach and reinforce, were the first component of SWPBS the green team developed. Communication and data were critical to their development. The green team gathered feedback from staff and examined data on behavioral infractions in order to determine their most significant behavioral needs overall and by area of the building (green team leader 1). Then, they

developed a matrix of rules that defined the expectations by each area of the building (green team leader 1). After developing the matrix, they developed the high frequency acknowledgements (gotchas) that students would earn for following the expectations and be able to enter into a weekly raffle for a prize (green team leader 1). Throughout, the green team was "...constantly informing [staff] of the process and steps where we were at and asking for input and so forth" (green team leader 2). Communication between the green team and staff was a core feature of the development of SWPBS.

After six months of planning, at the beginning of the fourth quarter, the green team tested pieces of SWPBS. They introduced the expectations matrix for a couple areas of the building and gotchas (leadership, teachers). Green team leader two explained, "we just started out with a couple different areas of the building, and then the next year we progressed." They exercised care in the amount of practices they communicated because they wanted to "get the kids inducted slowly instead of all the sudden a big huge commotion" (green team leader 2) and have it be "...gradual so people weren't over taxed by it all" (teacher 9). Communicating too much too fast would result in resistance and hinder later buy-in.

The green team also supported buy-in by carefully constructing a system that met the school's needs. Teacher nine, who was a member of the initial green team, explained, "we just wanted to slowly weave it in and really begin to address needs and not create a system that was just there for the sake of being there." Taking time to develop and implement systems and practices well was critical for buy-in because "...buy-in was going to be based on the quality of the product" (teacher 9).

## Implementation

The green team continued developing SWPBS through the fourth quarter and the summer and was ready to implement the entire system at the beginning of the subsequent school year (green team leader 2). The green team taught SWPBS to staff during the first two institute days in August 2006 (green team leader 2). They foreshadowed the importance of data to ongoing implementation by emphasizing the data system during these institute days. They "...introduced this concept called SWIS, school-wide information [system], and [that] we were going to be tracking the data, and the data was going to be [shared] on a monthly basis presented" (principal).

The green team also introduced the system for teaching the expectations matrix to students, shared this system with the staff during the institute days, and facilitated the teaching of the matrix to students the first two days of school. The principal described the first boot camp in the following manner:

Rolling out that matrix was, for the first time, it was something that was done systematically. And not only was it discussed but it was placed into action. Where the students would walk the entire building, and time would be spent in terms of, "what does being safe, being responsible, and being respectful look like as you are entering the building in the morning? What does it look like in our café? What does it look like in our resource center? What does it look like in your classroom?" And that was much more beneficial than me standing up saying, "welcome back, rule number one, rule number two, rule number three."

Once the expectations were taught, the green team and principal made sure that "students were getting gotchas – ...recognizing good choices that kids are making and positive behavior" (principal). They also introduced parents to SWPBS "once we got this up off the ground, ...through the handbooks and so forth. And at – through PTSA [(parent-

teacher organization)]. [The principal] made presentations at PTSA” (green team leader 1).

However, the principal and the green team approached year one of implementation with the understanding that buy-in and full implementation would take time. The principal explained, “...we knew that year one of implementation was going to be our baseline data. ...Change is not an event; it’s a process. That’s why it took awhile for it to roll out.” Their attitude facilitated buy-in because, as teacher eight explained, “...you have to get a baseline...of behaviors and then implement a few little things and then see those behaviors improve and then you get buy-in.”

That being said, in the spring of the school’s first full year of SWPBS implementation they met the implementation fidelity criteria defined by the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), which defines implementation fidelity as achieving 80% overall and at least 80% on the subscale that assesses the teaching of school-wide expectations (Horner et al., 2004; please see Figure 1 for SET scores). However, their first year of implementation fidelity data depicted room for improvement, especially in managing behavioral violations.

**Buy-in.** Staff buy-in was critical to implementation. As aforementioned, participants involved in the early stages of SWPBS implementation noted a gradual introduction to SWPBS facilitated buy-in. The principal and green team also supported buy-in by ensuring they fulfilled their responsibilities, communicated data, and gathered and listened to feedback.



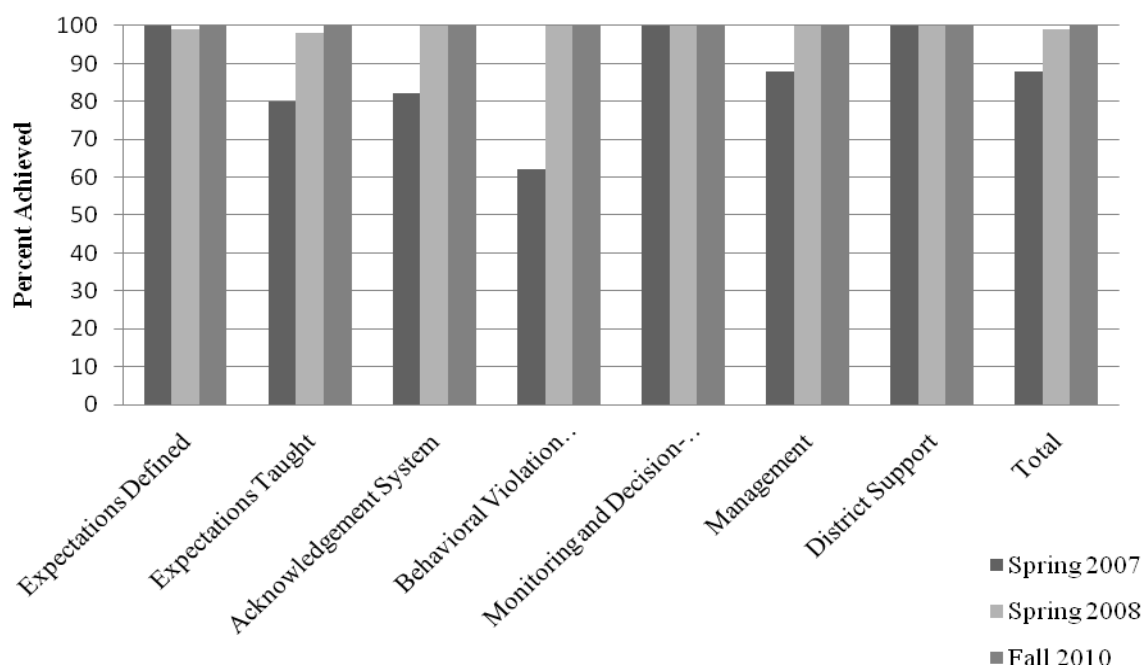


Figure 1. Percent of points achieved on *Schoolwide Evaluation Tool* (SET; Horner et al., 2004) subscales and overall over time

The principal appeared to support buy-in by following through on his responsibilities. S/he explained, "...we agreed that if we get [ODRs] from you, teachers, in a timely manner, then it will be our responsibility to get them back to you in a timely manner." Teacher twelve explained clear, quick, and consistent communication regarding discipline helped teachers feel confident in the system. Green team members five and six noted that communication surrounding discipline improved drastically. Indeed, the SET subscale that assesses the management of behavioral violations was 62% achieved in the spring of 2007 and 100% achieved in the spring of 2008 (see Figure 1).

The principal and green team also sought to foster buy-in by communicating data. As the principal explained, "people need to see the data" in order to buy-in. They need to know it is working (principal). Green team leader one noted they "...presented data

regularly at every faculty meeting.” Consistently presenting data appeared to support buy-in because teachers realized that behavior problems were decreasing and that gave them more time to teach. Green team member three explained, teachers are “...like ‘ok, that’s actually making my life better because I can get back to teaching.’ ...Everyone here, everyone in this building cares about teaching.” The green team communicated data to

...convince and create this atmosphere that [teaching cool tools] is not a waste of time – this will work. ...We showed research from other schools. And just little by little we began chipping away at that block. And then all of a sudden, it was – it started to come around. (green team leader 3)

Teacher nine explained why buy-in took time and then started to come together. She also explained why the green team’s relentless communication of data and the green team’s and principal’s advocacy for SWPBS implementation were critical. She explained, “teachers wanted to make sure it could really effect an impact and not just on paper say that it does. So I guess really they wanted to test it out, initially.”

Communication in general appeared critical to buy-in. Green team member five explained,

...at the beginning some of the communication wasn’t getting out to other staff members – and we added sending emails and having notes from each team that were sent, and then teams would talk about it in their own groups, and then go through any of the issues they have. So there were different channels by which they could communicate back and forth. So by doing that you’re able to get other staff input, not only just committee members, and then you are going to have more buy-in that way too. As long as it’s talked about all around.

Below, teacher nine explains that the level of communication indicated investment in SWPBS; it was not another fleeting initiative.

There was a lot of sharing with the staff at large. And I think it took a couple of years [because] ...everyone was kinda waiting to see whether or not it was going to stick around or not go to delete. But then when [the green team] kept going back with it ...over time there was good buy in.

Of course, some staff continued to resist SWPBS. The principal explained that a small percentage of people in every organization will resist any change by saying, “there are the ten percenters in every organization who would have said ‘no’ at the moment of their own birth.” S/he and participants involved in earlier stages of implementation seemed to feel that teachers who were close to retirement were also resistant to SWPBS. When these individuals retired, the principal stated that s/he supported buy-in by replacing them with individuals who accepted the principles behind SWPBS or SWPBS itself. The principal explained,

I’ve had the chance over the last seven years to hire a number of teachers here. One thing I have known throughout my career is that whenever you have an opportunity to hire somebody is that you are bringing someone in who has similar beliefs about working with young people, or, they have a thirst to learn how to do that. Hiring the right people is a huge variable in the success of [SWPBS]. Teachers, who perhaps might be viewed as perhaps negative teachers, um, those were the ones that I think were, they were kind of blocking at first. But I would say today, I would say, 90% of our teachers I think are embracing the concept.

In addition, green team leader two noted “more and more teachers coming in ...was a big thing [because] ...we [lost] some of those experienced teachers that were so set in their ways...” Green team leader three also indicated the school got “...a lot of new, younger, teachers... [who] ...were open-minded to what we were doing.” Green team member four expressed a similar perception.

... the people who’ve been around the organization for numerous years, are resistant to change. As those who are very resistant to change are

either weeded out through retirement processes or movement of some sort... [Then,] the new influx of people just understand that this is the way things are, this is the way things are done. (green team member 4)

### **Sustained Implementation**

The school reached SWPBS implementation fidelity as measured by the SET in the spring of 2007 and not only sustained, but improved implementation fidelity as measured by the SET in the spring of 2008. Since the school demonstrated implementation fidelity two years in a row on the SET, they used the *Benchmarks of Quality* (BoQ; Cohen et al., 2007) to measure SWPBS implementation in the springs of 2009 and 2010. Their scores of 100% in 2009 and 98% in 2010 indicated they continued to sustain SWPBS. The SET was used again in the fall of 2010 to evaluate implementation fidelity at the time of data collection and the school achieved a score of 100%.

Just as administrative support, communication, and data seemed influential in successful implementation, they appeared to facilitate sustained implementation. The principal's and other participants' statements suggested the principal leads the school in SWPBS implementation by communicating its importance through actions and words. Several participants also seemed to suggest communication supported sustained implementation by engraining SWPBS into the school culture. Finally, participants' responses suggested the green team's use of communication and data to inform the development of refinement of systems and practices created a culture of continuous improvement that keeps implementation moving forward.

**Administrative Support.** Several participants highlighted the importance of the principal to sustaining SWPBS. For example, green team leader one explained, "...the support of the principal wanting it to be successful in your building is a key component." In addition, teacher thirteen suggested the principal supports continued implementation of SWPBS through communication by saying he is a strong leader who "...helps drive it. ...We hear about it all the time, [and] I think [that] helps [keep] the momentum going."

The principal noted he believes it is his responsibility to remind teachers to keep providing the SWPBS message and recognize positive behavior. He does this every Monday morning, when he gets

...on the announcements... welcoming kids, reminding them of what our [SWPBS] goal is for the quarter, and then giving them SWIS data, and then also reminding them on a weekly basis what our core values are. "Continue to walk on the right side. Please continue to keep hands and feet to self. And teachers please continue to give gotchas to kids when you catch 'em."

Staff indicated they find these reminders to be helpful. For example, program assistant six noted that

...you will hear the principal every once in awhile on the announcements say, "don't forget to give out the gotchas" and it's like, "oh yeah!"... So I think those reminders are helpful... Everybody is so busy with everything that we have to do in a day that it is the little things that you forget about and just the reminders...

However, the principal seems to do more than just communicate through announcements. He appears to communicate the importance of SWPBS by example. As green team leader three explained,

The [principal] will stand in the hallways and ...get on his megaphone and the kids know like, "ahhh I've gotta get there gotta get there" and they are, they're on time, they're ready, they have their materials... They laugh...

at [principal] sitting with his megaphone in the hallway, and it gets them to do it. Or he'll pull out a bench and sit in the middle to get kids to walk on the right side. And they do it, they laugh and they like it, but it's creating the culture that we have.

Green team leader one seemed to suggest that the principal's engagement in SWPBS is critical for buy-in because the teachers will only follow the system if the leaders of the system engage in it.

**SWPBS as School Culture.** Indeed, green team leader three suggested they constantly communicate the importance of everyone participating in SWPBS, such as teaching cool tools, by continuously providing the message that it is about culture and not individuals. Green team leader three indicated "...now, [SWPBS has] become such a part of our culture..." The school sustains SWPBS because it "...permeates the entire culture" (green team member 3) and "is the way we do school" (green team member 4). Green team member four also explained SWPBS "... is part of the culture of the school so making it the culture of the school everybody buys into in and participates in some sort of way – if it is not doing nothing else but supporting the expectations."

Participants' statements relating to the school-wide expectations seemed to suggest they are now part of the school culture. The names the school gives these expectations – core values, common language, and Wildcat Ways – illustrates their integration into the school's life. Green team leader three explained, "the central components are definitely our core values and that's what we base everything on here." S/he went on to explain that "...the core values really drive [SWPBS] ... [the students] see that it's a culture." Green team member four and teacher nine expressed similar

perspectives. Teacher nine provided examples of the Wildcat Ways' incorporation into school culture.

Even in the classrooms... we have the Wildcat Ways posted; we have it posted throughout the building. Even when students serve detention, they have reflection that's built into the Wildcat Ways, speaking to "how could you have, what happened and well which Wildcat Way did you not follow?" and with the plan of "what could you have done and what you could do? What have you learned and what could you do next time?" It really all filters back to our core values.

Green team leaders, a program assistant, and teachers noted that everyone is aware of the core values and utilize them as "common language." Indeed, all participants described the core values or teaching of expectations when defining SWPBS. Green team leader three explained, "... [the] core values that we follow, they're in place in the classrooms, they're in place in the hallways, they're in place everywhere in the school" and "everyone is [talking] the same language." Teacher five also expressed that "...we are all using the same language."

According to green team leader three, the incorporation of SWPBS into the school culture happened three years ago. The principal also noted a change took place over the last few years by saying,

what we have found is that there is more of a system-wide plan in place, in terms of trying to get to the point where we are all using common [SWPBS] language. That I have noticed a significant improvement over the last few years.

The principal indicated s/he has been an active facilitator of everyone using the common language by saying, "...anything I would talk about, I would want to mention what core value we are discussing..." The principal explained he continually reminds students and

staff of the core values because "...if you don't keep championing the cause, it could ...not be as implemented with the fidelity that we want."

Participants' discussions regarding SWPBS seemed to suggest that the incorporation of SWPBS into school culture related to a shift in thinking. Participants suggested that instead of reacting to and punishing negative behavior, they try to focus on teaching positive behavior and preventing negative behavior. For example, teacher four expressed a shift in his/her thinking as a result of SWPBS by saying,

...re-teach [behavior]... was a big change in verbiage for me. So it's not really punishment, its recognizing behavior that is not meeting expectations and then re-teaching, helping them to understand what that should look like, and doing it in a positive way using like, "you did this really well. Let's work on that."

Green team member six expressed his/her preference for taking time to teach positive behavior by saying,

I think that's what's so great about cool tools ... [is] it's more of a team discussing it, allowing others to share their stories or share what they are seeing or share what a friend has been a part of, I think that's a lot more – students can understand and relate to that a lot more, rather than again, you are just sent to the office for something and you have a lunch detention and you sit through it.

Green team member four added,

And to tag on to what six just said, that word positive comes in because that's what [SWPBS] is, it's positive and we address things from positive standpoint. Yeah, we may deal with a negative issue, but usually we are looking for the positive outcome and reinforcing the positive to deal with those things, those issues. That approach as opposed to "here's a detention for this and here's a detention for that, this is what you aren't doing, or this is what you are doing that is wrong." What are the positive ways to counteract or to interact? And that's what we are reinforcing.



Teacher twelve indicated that a culture of focusing on the positive affected her own practice by encouraging her to call home for positive behavior. Teacher thirteen also provided an example of how a shift to focusing on the positive impacted his/her practice.

And I think as a teacher it's helped me as well in my classroom to be thinking when I am getting frustrated, going, "oh my gosh, they don't have their journals out and I have told them 85 million times to take their journals out" and I want to be on the negative side, it helps me remember, "oh wait, let me praise the positive and say 'oh, thank you so and so for taking your journal out'" instead of being on the negative side and getting frustrated.

**Culture of Continuous Improvement.** Once the school reached implementation fidelity and staff bought in to SWPBS, the principal and the green team appeared to not become complacent. Throughout years of implementation they reported that they sought to continually improve SWPBS systems and practices. The principal indicated the school changes and adapts rather than ruminating on problems. As the principal explained

...if the culture is one of continuous improvement, and if it's approached that way, versus something is broken here, well, it is not broken, you just need to continue to tweak and continue to improve to make this system even better.

Several participants stated the goal of the school is to continuously improve. Green team leader three mentioned that "...the goal is for continual improvement and to continue to strive to reach our next level." Teacher thirteen depicted this culture by saying,

I think even through talking about it here, I think it makes me think about, "huh, how can I" – even have you raise the question makes me think, "hmm, could [SWPBS] help encourage that? Like help encourage engagement?" So, I think I am thinking in my mind of the three core values and how I can talk about them more in class, and bring them up more in the class and see if that is something that can happen.

Teacher eleven summarized the culture of continuous improvement and its relationship to sustainability in the following manner:

When we reach that point, we move to the next level, and we don't just stagnate and say "well this is worthless and let's stop here." How can we make it even better? Just like good teaching practices, every year you evaluate what worked, what didn't, and you are constantly getting better at what you do. And I think [SWPBS] here, every year, something else is added and something else is improved upon.

The drive to improve fosters SWPBS sustainability, as green team leader three explained,

...the constant challenge with the sustainability is continuing to reinvent. It's not like reinventing the wheel, like we already know, the system's there but it's just tailoring it to what we need right now. I think, keeping it fresh, ...It's like we need to look at the viewpoints of everybody and how can we kind of just tailor, just you know, get it to how could we make the most people, not happy, but I guess kind of happy because we have to continue to sustain this and so it's just yeah. Just driving it and keeping it fresh.

The culture of continuous improvement appeared to drive the green team to seek feedback, examine data, and use feedback and data to improve systems and practices.

Green team leader one explained, "...as with anything you're always doing fine tuning and trying to make changes to adapt to your school. ...So it's constant restructuring with the plan, looking at the data to see what works best." Green team leader two explained that "the data, you know, drives everything that we do."

The green team's thirst for data to inform improvement is evidenced by the varied sources of data they gather and collect. They use staff feedback, SWIS data, survey data, and implementation fidelity data. Some of the feedback gathered from staff is in the form of plus/delta, which is an informal tool staff use to indicate what was positive (plus) and needs to be changed (delta) about a particular practice. Teacher twelve explained,

as soon as we finished the boot camp, at least on our team, we did a plus/delta right away, on that Friday we did one. So that at the end of this year when we plan for next year we are not all like “I don’t remember.” So, we had some ideas for some other, slight changes, which I think that’s, I mean, you can’t do the same thing over and over again.

The relentless use of data to drive the improvement of systems and practices is also evidenced by the green team’s development of data collection tools when existing tools do not meet their needs. The principal explained,

we weren’t asking any really feedback from kids either and that’s when we decided that we needed to get information. So we developed some type of feedback instrument – how do kids feel about their school, how do they feel about their safety – and we continue to do that on a yearly basis.

The apparent ease of communication amongst the green team and between the green team and staff appears to facilitate the green team’s ability to gather data and feedback and use them to improve SWPBS. Green team member five explained communication within the team as follows:

I can say whatever I want at a meeting and then I know they’ll listen to it respectfully and if they don’t agree, it will be mentioned. So I think that’s a big part, if you are going to change something then you have to be open to giving up your ideas.

Green team member five added this level of comfort translates to teaching teams and the ability to address feedback gathered at teaching team meetings. For example,

...by sending those notes out to all teams, you are able to also, sometimes I can’t figure out what would be the pitfalls of something, or what some teachers see as a problem, well when you go bring it back to teams, again, these are groups of people that are working together for a long period of time, they’re comfortable explaining it. So they’ll let me know what are the issues they have with a certain thing, or maybe the schedule of how we are going to do this. So when we take it back to green I can say, “my team is really concerned about this issue” or someone else on the team can say this. So, I would say being comfortable and being open and

communicating to all teachers is how we can help improve that. (green team member 5)

Teacher twelve corroborated this sentiment by indicating comfort in communicating with the team.

...We get notes..., I'll use the green team as an example; it will say [at the bottom] "please ask if you need clarification." And I don't feel as though if I didn't understand I couldn't go up to the person and say "could you explain this to me better?" (teacher 12)

Green team leader three also noted that the team is "...open minded enough and our staff feels comfortable enough presenting [concerns] to teams and you know, team members feel comfortable enough bringing it back and discussing it and that we're fine with reinventing." According to teacher eleven, progress is made due to

problem-solving as a staff... as well as bringing them back to the individual teams, ...the green team, and saying ok we've discussed this, we've heard from the staff, how can work on this to make it better. So, good communication across the school.

Teacher thirteen noted that "...the green team heard [feedback] and they changed things around for this year to try and make it better."

**Improved systems.** One system the green team revised over time was the process of gathering, entering, and reporting behavior data. The process needed to be efficient and user friendly. For example, green team leader three explained,

...we needed to come up with a solid system that's unified that everybody... will want to use. So, it had to be user friendly. It had to be simple. If you could have seen our first [ODR] form, it was nuts. ...So it was just trying to keep things simple, ...keeping it for people to want to buy-in.

In addition to being user friendly, the process needed to be efficient. Green team member five explained,

...can you carry it out and can you do it in a timely manner is huge. For example, if you are using a referral system, which is how we collect data, if you send [an ODR] in, that needs to be put in a system and sent out. Tardies was another one. It's not gonna be successful if it takes weeks... to get the tardies in [because] by that time you have already lost your connection with what kids are – that are tardy four days in a row – they could be tardy four days straight before we even know.

The green team also focused on revising the system for responding to tardiness.

Teacher and leadership participants cited the tardy policy as a major improvement.

Green team member two expressed, “now there is a lot more immediate action right after the fact of what is going on, especially with the tardies, with the whole detention and the tardy policy – I think it's great.” Green team leader two explained the consequences for tardiness were not effective initially because they were the same each time, to the point where some students were in lunch detention every day. When the green team revised the tardy policy, they made the consequences increasingly more significant based on cumulative tardiness. Green team leader two explained the shift to graduated consequences as follows:

...now we tweaked it to where, you know ok, on your fourth tardy, you know, you get three free ones, we can understand that. On the fourth one, they get the tardy, they do lunch detention. Now it's the fifth tardy, ok well, what we used to do is the lunch detention again. And a lunch detention again. That wasn't working. The kids, that was not that big a deal. To miss a lunch, you know? So then they added an after school detention. Now you're at an hour and a half, and that was only a one-time deal. After that, then it was Saturday school. Now you're coming on a Saturday, so now you're really you know, causing some, you know, them to really think twice about getting there, to their classes. And that was a big thing about tweaking, the tardies...

However, the consequences may not have been as much of a deterrent without clear communication of the tardy discipline process and consistent application of the

consequences. Several participants noted that the current tardy policy is successful because it is clear and consistent. For example, teacher nine explained,

And again we'd tell the kids, "hey, look, you're on your second." Every time a kid gets a tardy we'd tell them where they were at in terms of the number of tardies. We give them a heads up until the third one, it's like, "you really want to avoid it because you are going to go to lunch detention." And even when they served detention, it will say there how many tardies they're on. And we have been pretty good as far as the consequencing of, you know, like a lunch detention, after school, so three is a warning and the fourth one is lunch. I think that really of all the things, as far as a tardy, that's helped tremendously. The consistency.

Teacher two explained the clarity and consistency of the tardy policy by saying the following:

...kids know they are tardy [and] they know exactly what's going to happen. They walk in, they write their name on the board and, I'm a person who I like to know my expectations and if I am sending a kid to the office I like to know what will happen. I think it's good for the teachers too. You know what's going to happen. You know if a kid had their fourth tardy you know what the punishment is going to be. And if it comes back and it is not that punishment you are justified as a teacher to go to the office and say "why wasn't this given?"

Another system the green team refined was the teaching system. They refined how they define and teach expectations at the beginning of the year. Green team leader one explained that changes were all driven by "feedback [and] ...surveys ...from staff and students." With regard to defining expectations, green team leader one explained, "teachers would say they are great in the hallway but they're not acting appropriately in the cafeteria" so they would focus on defining how to behave appropriately in the cafeteria. At first they defined how to behave appropriately in the computer lab and library separately, but then combined them because teachers felt it was redundant to define behaviors in these areas separately (green team leader 1). The green team also

refined how the boot camp worked several years in a row. Green team leader two explained,

the beginning of school has changed every year. ...This would've been our fifth full year of starting the school year, and that again, like I said, has changed each time. And I think we, I think, from all the feedback we got from all the teams, it was, everybody's very happy with it. And that's the first time that that's happened. So we think we can keep that in place.

At first they spent a whole day reviewing the expectations, but they changed the boot camp to the first two hours of a day three days in a row because the students were drained after a whole day of teaching. As teacher eleven explained,

the bootcamp was changed from last year, the year before. Because teachers said "gosh, it was way too much, the kids were drained, they weren't even getting half the information. They can't spend the whole day doing that." So then the green team heard that and they changed things around for this year to try and make it better. So I think that aides in teacher buy-in and the teachers feel supported and heard and in turn the kids have a better experience.

Thus, the participants reported that not only does seeking and using feedback foster sustainability through continuous improvement; it fosters buy-in because stakeholders feel their feedback is valuable.

**Improved practices.** School-wide celebrations are a recently refined practice and thus were a source of much conversation amongst participants. Green team leader one explained that they sought "...a lot [of feedback] from students on the celebrations and if they did like it or didn't like something." They also "...asked for feedback from teachers on... celebrations" (green team leader 1). Activities that comprise the celebrations were changed in responses to feedback, but, as described below, the green team went against staff feedback regarding who could participate in celebrations.

The activities were changed because the green team "...wanted to make sure it's a celebration for all and not just for a select few" (green team leader 1). Teacher eleven explained, "...at the beginning the celebration would be a movie. Well now we'll have games or the kids will get to go out and be with their peers... That's gotten better and more appealing for the kids."

With regard to who gets to participate in celebrations, staff felt that students who had a major discipline infraction should be excluded. They wanted them to partake in an intervention instead. At first, the green team went along with this sentiment. Green team leader two explained,

...teachers [did] not understand how like we talked about last week, there should be a celebration for all kids at the end of the quarter. It took awhile for teachers to understand that and we didn't at first as a school. We were like, "well let's take these kids out of the celebration, they shouldn't celebrate, they've been troublemakers all quarter..." We took those kids out and gave them an intervention at the end of the quarter, which I'm sure they weren't happy about.

However, the green team members and leaders indicated they felt that students who had a major behavioral infraction should be allowed to participate in celebrations because they have already served the consequence for their behavioral infraction. In addition, they were members of a student body that met its behavior goal. Green team members and leaders explained that because they felt strongly about this position, they insisted that all students participate in celebrations, made sure to communicate their position, and made sure the purpose of celebrations were clear. Green team leader two explained

...over the last year and a half we've kind of come around to..., "hey these kids have gone through the interventions ...to correct their behaviors and so, they've done that already. Now let's just all celebrate as a school, and, and move on."



Teacher thirteen noted that who gets to participate in celebrations seems settled.

... My first year or two here, I think there was a lot of confusion. If a kid got a minor and major or two majors can they celebrate with us at the end of the quarter? It was a huge, I think it was like every quarter we had that question and there was never really clarification to it. So I think this year it feels like it's settled... (teacher 13)

S/he also indicated s/he understand the rationale behind the decision.

...It seems like this year is the first year that it really started where... [students with behavioral infractions] are able to celebrate as well, because they did "serve their time" for their offense they committed. (teacher 13)

Participants also indicated communication regarding the purpose of celebrations improved. Teacher seven expressed that

...the goals now, the administration is making the student's more aware. Whereas before we had goals, but I don't think the students were necessarily aware of what they were and how we were doing. Now there's a little more emphasis on here's where we are, we have this many weeks to go, making sure the students know what the goals are and how close we are to making them. Or a celebration at the end.

Teacher thirteen also noted, "...this year there's been more, like on announcements, or more communication to the kids, what the celebration is and what the celebration is for..."

However, the majority of the program assistant participants disagreed with the decision to allow all students to participate in the school-wide celebration if the school-wide goal was met. For example, program assistant four explained,

I know that last year that the very first celebration we had I was in a separate room with the kids who weren't allowed to participate. I don't think that happens anymore. ... I think it was anybody that had a major infraction wasn't allowed to participate, so we ended up watching the lovely video that we then watched for a cool tool about the rumor spreading and the girl getting really mad. We watched that video and they

had to have a conversation about it. So, it was used as a time for them to work on respectful, responsible, safe kind of things.

Program assistant seven responded by saying, “I had not heard that anywhere, because it was anybody that had a major was not allowed, so that you had a goal, you know, ‘hey if you wanted to be at this fun school event – improve your behavior.’” Program assistant seven expressed that allowing everyone to participate in the school-wide celebration “...cheapened the celebration.” Program assistant six responded by saying, “I agree with you because then that’s showing that student that there’s no consequence for their behavior, and then other students [think], ‘well how come this kid can get in trouble and still participate?’” Program assistant eight added, “so that lessons the motivation.” Then, program assistant seven acknowledged the viewpoint expressed by the team by saying, “then I did hear that they figure that they’ve been punished already, so that they don’t need to be punished again.” Program assistant six also indicated s/he understood that but still disagreed.

I understand that part. However, to their peers’ eyes, they’re still not punished. Unfortunately peer pressure is a lot more difficult to accept in the end. Individually yes, you might know “Ok I’ve been punished. I did my time; I did my detention or whatever” And that’s usually pretty private, I think, but to that other group of students that watched your behavior be bad, then that’s sending the wrong message to that student... (program assistant 6).

Thus, as the principal said, they need to “stay the course” and continue to inform staff of the philosophy behind celebrations and the benefit of including all students.

## **Summary**

Those involved in the initial development and past and present implementation provided the most insight in to research question one. Their insight suggested administrative support, communication, data, and buy-in worked together foster the development, implementation, refinement, and sustainment of systems and practices that met the school's needs and were acceptable to staff. How these systems and practices impacted the lives of students will be discussed under research question two.

### **Research Question Two**

Research question two asked, "Does SWPBS relate to well-being? If so, how? Specifically, to what degree are the following factors demonstrated and related to SPWBS implementation over time: academic achievement, problem behavior, prosocial behavior, engagement in school, safety, victimization, and relationships?" The school adopted SWPBS due to concerns with negative behavior and low Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. Several participants across several different participant groups indicated SWPBS addressed these concerns by increasing time for academic instruction through reduced problem behavior and the creation of a positive learning environment. However, participants expressed concerns with bullying and questioned the degree to which values taught through SWPBS were internalized by students. To some extent, participants felt that SWPBS related to improved relationships and engagement in school.

## Behavior

**Prosocial Behavior.** Participants indicated that, at present, most students behave appropriately. Seventh grade students expressed that students generally do the right thing, such as help others and act responsibly. Adult participants observed that students are more prosocial than they were in the past. They depict more helping behavior. The principal explained,

As I visit classrooms, many teachers at times will have kids in cooperative groups, and during science labs for example, you sink or swim together. I think kids are swimming more, working in groups here more than perhaps maybe it was a few years ago.

In addition, green team leader three explained,

...the kids are really willing to go outside of what, you know, being liked to if I say, “get in groups of three or get into partners,” – I have – I’m fortunate, I mean... I teach... all of seventh grade right now... the kids with Down’s syndrome, kids with other, just everything – I get to teach them. And it is so cool to see the kids partnering up with them. And now they’re like, “oh I wanna work with so and so today” and that takes a lot, for a teenager, a junior high kid in the most awkward age to say, “no I think I’m gonna work with this person because they need help.” It’s just, it’s the coolest thing. ...If that’s happening in my room, it’s gotta be happening then other places in the school.

Several participants mentioned that if someone drops something in the hallway students will rush to help.

However, the bully survey conducted in the fall of 2009 provides mixed results regarding the presence of prosocial behavior. A third of students indicated that they never observe others inviting a student who is alone at lunch to join them (see Table 5). A little over a third indicated that they sometimes observe others inviting a student who is alone to join them (see Table 5). Data were distributed similarly when students were

asked if students encourage each other to do their best (see Table 5). On the other hand, the majority of students indicated that other students will try to comfort them when they are upset (see Table 5).

Table 5. The Percent of Students who Rated Statements Describing Prosocial Behavior as Never or Hardly Ever True, Sometimes True, Often True, and Almost Always or Always True by Grade and Overall

	Never/ Hardly Ever			Sometimes			Often			Almost Always/ Always		
	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All
Others will invite a kid who is alone at lunch to join them	31	36	33	35	44	39	27	16	22	8	4	6
Other kids try to comfort me when I am upset	9	14	11	19	24	21	28	31	29	44	31	38
Kids encourage others to do their best	21	42	32	36	36	36	32	12	22	10	10	10

**Problem behavior.** Furthermore, several participants cited data indicating that there has been a decrease in problem behaviors since the implementation of SWPBS. The principal noted that “the SWIS data is significant in terms of the decrease in both minor and major referrals.” Green team leader two also noted, “I think what the last SWIS data was showing, which we can obviously track everything now, is the last three years the number of referrals have gone down each year...” Green team leader three also

said, “our referrals continue to go down every year.” Indeed, the SWIS data does indicate the trend described by participants (see Figure 2). Green team member five provided a more qualitative example of the reduction in problem behavior. At first

...there was some writings in bathrooms and some things going on in different areas of the school and those things have stopped drastically. There’s not a lot of issues. So now we’re nitpicking on gum and we’re nitpicking on these things and really in the retrospect it’s a great improvement from before. (green team member 5)

Both seventh and eighth grade students expressed during focus groups that it is not that often that students misbehave.

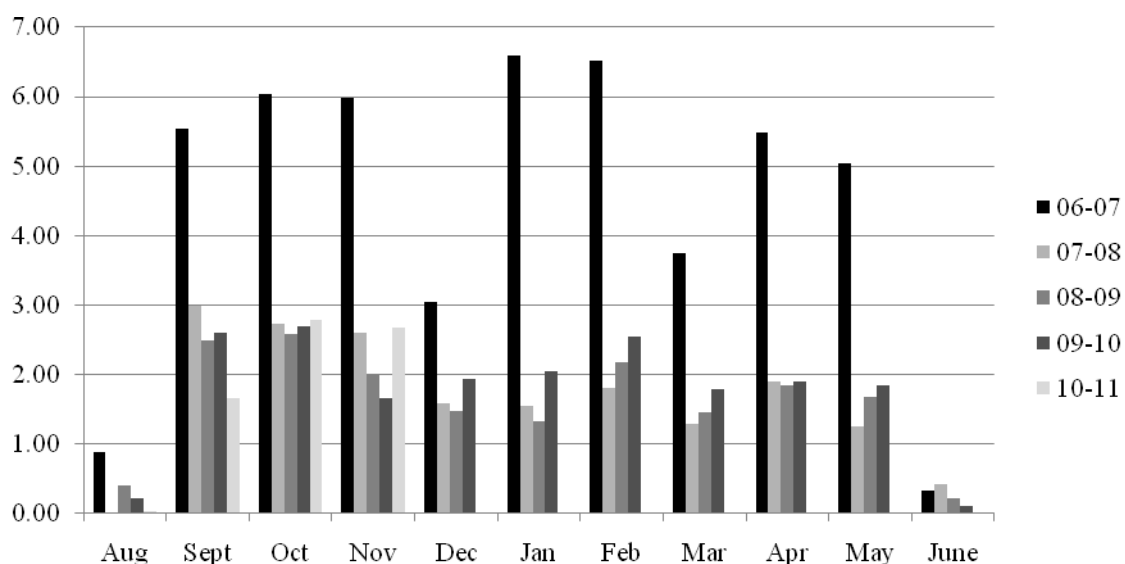


Figure 2. Office discipline referrals (ODRs) per day, per month, per enrollment over years of SWPBS implementation

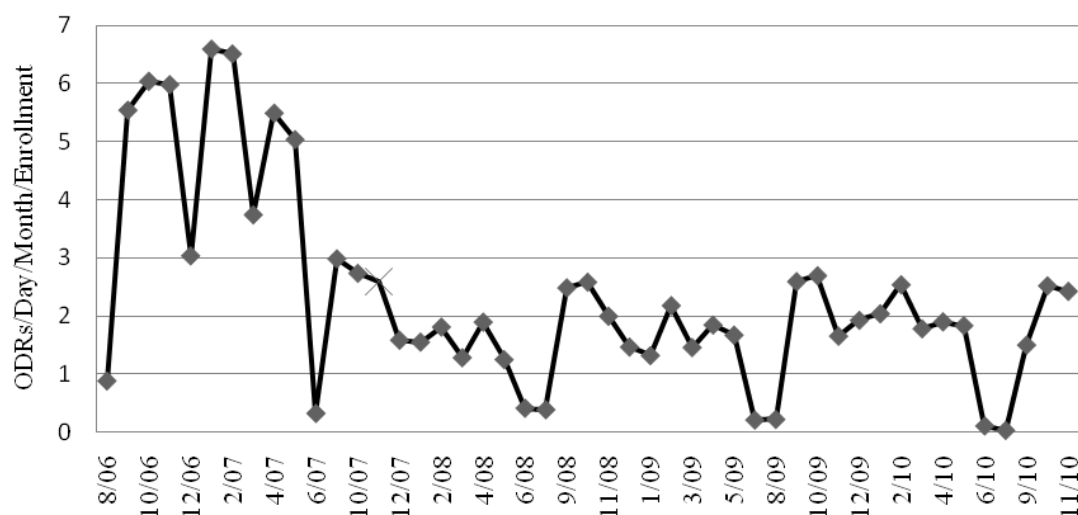
When mentioning reductions in problem behavior, green team leaders, green team members and teachers highlighted the reductions in tardiness and related it to the implementation of the tardy policy. Green team leader three explained, “when we first implemented this, I think [the] first quarter we had 1,200 tardies, or something ridiculous.

We're now down to like 130 [in the first quarter]." Teacher nine noted, "it wasn't until really we implemented [the revised tardy policy] that we saw a decrease [in tardies], you know." Teacher eight explained "...our system for running that with the three tardies and lunch detention, then for detention, and then Saturday school, that's huge you know kids don't want to come." Green team leader one also expressed that the tardy policy "brought down tardies immensely" and green team member one noted "the tardies are unbelievably down." Teacher five also felt that "the biggest impact I have seen is in tardies."

The school's discipline data indicates that tardiness comprise the majority of the referrals, especially prior to the implementation of the tardy policy. For example, the first year of SWPBS implementation tardiness accounted for 77% of all ODRs. After implementation of the tardy policy they ranged from 53% to 63% of all ODRs (see Table 6). Moreover, a change-point analysis indicated that a significant reduction in ODRs occurred in the fall of 2007 (see Figure 3) when the tardy policy was implemented. Thus, it stands to reason that the drop in tardiness would stand out to participants and that they would feel the tardy policy was effective. As green team member five explained, tardiness "was the main [problem behavior] that we struggled with in the beginning and that has gone down a lot."

Table 6. The Number of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and the Percentage of ODRs Accounted for by Tardiness

School Year	Tardiness Count	Percent of ODRs
06-07	4,181	77%
07-08	1,260	63%
08-09	984	55%
09-10	1001	53%



*Note.* The “x” indicates the time point where a significant reduction in ODRs occurred according to a change-point analysis.

Figure 3. Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) per day, per month, per enrollment over years of SWPBS implementation

**Expectations and Consequences.** In general, participants felt clear and consistent expectations and consequences associated with SWPBS related to the behavioral changes observed. Seventh and eighth grade students noted the expectations help students behave. Teacher two explained clear and consistent expectations and consequences help students “...have a [clear] idea of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.” Moreover, “...children knowing their expectations, what their rewards or consequences may be for particular behaviors, makes it easier for them to follow those behaviors” (green team leader 1). Green team member three explained, “When you are in a school that doesn’t have consistent expectations of what is going to happen, there’s a lot of discipline issues...” Teacher twelve supported this point by describing his/her experience at a previous school.



...I did leave another school... one of my huge reasons was the behavior problems in the building that I did not feel as though there was support, and I feel like there was – especially in junior high they need rules.  
(teacher 12)

Not only do clear and consistent expectations and consequences support student behavior, they make teachers' jobs easier. Teacher five explained,

I think it's easier for every single teacher to handle problems in their room because we are all using the same language. We all have similar expectations, and the kids know what's coming. You behave once, or twice, or three times, or are late, it is systematized. So in a way it's good because in a school without a system, the teacher is left alone with the problems. But here there is always a procedure to follow. So in that way, it is easier.

Teacher eleven also explained,

I think consistency, having this building wide, ... and by explicitly teaching at the beginning of the year, the expectations, then it is easier for us, it takes the burden off of us, because we can then rely on those core values and say, "you are being disrespectful based on our core values, this is why." And it's language they are hearing across the board... So consistency is really important, especially for kids.

In addition, participants also expressed that the consequences themselves – gotchas, celebrations, ODRs, detentions, in-school suspensions, and time at the alternative school – serve to prevent negative behavior and promote appropriate behavior. The program assistants indicated they use gotchas to teach appropriate behavior. For example, program assistant four explained, "I especially like to set the gotcha down in front of somebody if they have just done something well in class and other kids see and it's kind of like, 'oh, ok, that was a good thing to do.'" Teachers noted that rewards help with promoting appropriate behavior. For example, teacher twelve explained, "... [when]

you give a gotcha they all of a sudden have everything out.” Similarly, teacher eleven explained,

I know that when I give out a gotcha, all of a sudden everyone else is looking, “well how come they got a gotcha?” And so it’s encouraging them to want to please me because they see what, because I always give out the gotchas and [say], “you’re getting a gotcha because of this.” And so, next thing you know I’ll see that snowball – those good behaviors.

Program assistant four observed a similar phenomenon, but felt that it was more rooted in a desire for attention from peers than to please the teacher. S/he explained,

I have also noticed ...it becomes something like, “oh this number of people did their homework, they are all gonna get gotchas.” Something where it is a made more public in the classroom the kids get a little more into it because it’s more of a competition like, “oh, I got one and you didn’t.” Or, you know, then it gives them a chance to say, “oh I got 10 gotchas from this week” and they pull them out. When they get attention for it from their peers I think it, for some reason, for some of them, it makes more of a difference...

However, student participants indicated that gotchas were less effective than other consequences in promoting appropriate behavior. Eighth grade student three noted, “some people don’t care about a gotcha.” Eighth grade student four added, “to some people it might just be a piece of paper...” In addition, program assistants and teachers suggested eighth grade students were less motivated by gotchas than seventh grade students. For example, program assistant eight said, “I think the 7<sup>th</sup> graders are more inclined to get more excited about getting a gotchas.” Teacher one explained, “a lot of the eighth graders I see, ‘oh, I got another gotcha. I don’t want a gotcha. I’m tired of this.’” The principal indicated that, based on the number of gotchas s/he sees in the seventh and eighth grade gotcha bins, “seventh grade teachers have a tendency to give out almost significantly more gotchas than eighth grade teachers.”

Eighth grade teachers might use fewer gotchas to reinforce positive behavior because eighth grade students are no longer motivated by them. Mandy teachers explained the gotchas lose their influence over time. An eighth grade student indicated that s/he is not longer motivated by gotchas because s/he has learned that “there’s not a chance you’ll win.” Program assistant eight observed the lack of interest in gotchas.

Just last week or the week before, I handed out gotchas to [eighth grade] students who were working together in groups and came up with positive statements and really did a good job in their assignment. As I was walking out of class I saw a lot of them on the floor... (program assistant 8)

Thus, there may also be fewer gotchas in the eighth grade gotcha bins because the eighth grade students are not turning theirs in. Program assistant seven suggested that staff should remind students “and say, ‘don’t just hang on to those, put them in the bucket, every time you don’t have one there you don’t win.’” However, eighth grade students expressed they did not have a chance of winning even if they did turn them in. Program assistant six summarized why students lose interest in gotchas.

I see the trend that could be that in the beginning of the school year the seventh graders are excited to get a reward and then it, I think it just trails off as the year goes on and then by eighth grade ...you can only hope that verbal reminders of positive behavior will help because that’s the only thing that maybe they’ll remember. A piece of paper in a bin that they ended up not any even winning a gift for, after while they are like “forget it, why should I bother?” (program assistant 6)

As opposed to the gotchas, students, teachers, and program assistants indicated students find quarterly celebrations motivating. Teachers seven and nine noted students’ behavior is more appropriate when they are regularly reminded of the behavioral goal for the upcoming celebration on the announcements each Monday. Eighth grade students indicated that the celebrations motivate them because they “get out of class sometimes”

(8<sup>th</sup> grade student 2) and “get to do activities with other people” (8<sup>th</sup> grade student 4).

Program assistant five echoed the views expressed by teachers and students.

I think the other thing that keeps kids motivated with this is we do the [SWPBS] celebrations throughout the year, and I think more than even the gotchas the kids really look forward to those [SWPBS] celebrations because it's a fun activity. They're outside or in the gym they'll have teacher vs. student basketball game or something like that... (program assistant 5)

However, punishments appeared to be the most effective tool for preventing negative behavior. When the eighth grade students were asked why students do the right thing, they said, “so they won't get in trouble” (8<sup>th</sup> grade participant 3) and “so the parents don't get mad” (8<sup>th</sup> grade participant 4). When asked if they do the right thing to earn a gotcha, eighth grade participant three said “no.” One consequence that appeared particularly effective in deterring negative behavior was the threat of going to the alternative school. Teacher twelve explained,

I think one of the reasons the behavior here [is good] ... is the kids do not like going to the alternative school, at all. ... We don't have out of school suspensions where a kid can just sit at home for five days. So, is that [SWPBS] or is that a district thing? Regardless of what it is, it definitely works.

Teacher twelve added, “the kids do not like the punishments that are given here – the choice of punishments. Sitting in that brick room in the office, sitting in the alternative school, not being able to eat lunch with their friends...”

Participants explained the tardy policy has related to such a reduction in tardiness due to the consistent progression of consequences it dictates. Teacher eight explained the “tardy policy was a big one. It was huge. And our system for running that with the three tardies and lunch detention, then four detention and then Saturday school, that's huge...”

Green team member six explained, "...if they don't learn real quick after tardy number four or five... A couple Saturday visits and it gets old quickly."

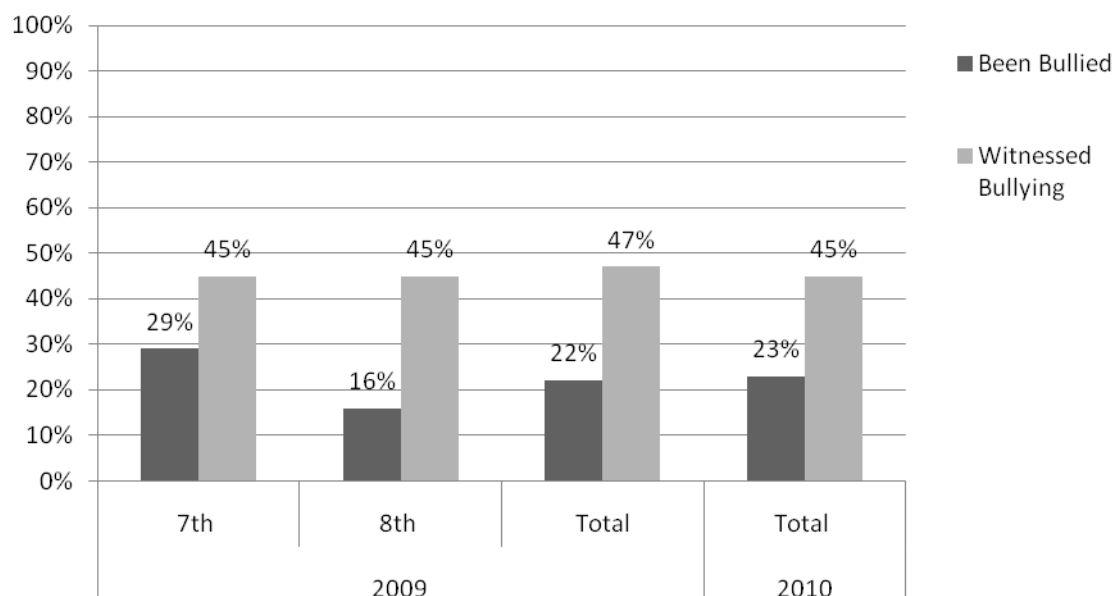
**Bullying.** Participants seemed to suggest SWPBS relates to the prevention of negative behavior and promotion of positive behavior through clear and consistent consequences associated with clear expectations. However, student and adult participants indicated concerns regarding the prevalence of bullying when administrators, teachers, and program assistants are not present to monitor behavior. Green team leader two expressed that while the amount of bullying taking place at the school was below the national average, s/he was concerned about the number of students who indicated they experienced bullying. For example,

...if you go over the national average where they say one out of three students is bullied, we are about right at one out of four, so we're under that, but yet every one of those four kids that feel like they've been bullied have a voice, and we need to try to help these kids..., we need to try to address that situation so that the kids do feel safe, not just one out of four, but everyone. (green team leader 2)

Seventh grade students also highlighted bullying as a concern. Seventh grade student two said, "I've witnessed bullying, like people making fun of what they wear, how they pronounce words, or, things like, or just saying stuff about them just for the fun of it." Seventh grade student one noted bullying happens due to "people tripping over other people, like saying stuff about them." The seventh grade students expressed more concern with the prevalence of bullying than the eighth grade students.

Green team leader two depicted an accurate reflection of the data gathered through the student surveys on bullying conducted in the falls of 2009 and 2010. The fall 2010 survey took place at the time of qualitative data collection. Both years, slightly less

than 25% of students indicated they were bullied (see Figure 4). Moreover, the data available from the fall of 2009 also indicates seventh grade students had more concerns regarding bullying, as 29% of seventh grade students indicated they were bullied and 16% of eighth grade students indicated they were bullied (see Figure 4). These data were not collected in 2010. Interestingly, 45% of both grades indicated they witnessed bullying in 2009, suggesting that the difference in experiencing bullying did not translate to witnessing bullying.



*Note.* Grade level data are not available for 2010.

Figure 4. The percent of students who reported experiencing or witnessing bullying by grade and year

Students indicated they do not report bullying when they witness it because they fear “the other person hurting them more” (7<sup>th</sup> grade student 1), they “...don’t want to get bullied” (8<sup>th</sup> grade student 5), and because “...it’s not their problem, so they don’t do anything about it” (8<sup>th</sup> grade student 3). In addition, the bully survey conducted in 2009

indicated that few students would tell an adult in school about bullying, especially if they witnessed it (see Tables 7 & 8). They were also unlikely to help someone they saw being bullied, especially the eighth grade students (see Table 8). These data were not collected in 2010.

Table 7. Who Students Tell When They Experience or Witness Bullying as Indicated by the Fall 2009 Bully and Safety Survey

	Victim	Witness
No one	33%	42%
Friend	37%	37%
Adult at School	10%	5%
Parent	14%	9%
Other	7%	7%

Table 8. The Likelihood That Students Will Help or Tell an Adult if They See Bullying as Indicated by the Percent of Students who Rated Statements Describing Intervention as Never or Hardly Ever True, Sometimes True, Often True, and Almost Always or Always True by Grade and Overall

	Never/ Hardly Ever			Sometimes			Often			Almost Always/ Always		
	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All
Other kids help if they see bullying	15	35	24	61	47	55	20	15	18	4	4	3
Kids tell adults when they see bullying	35	39	37	45	45	45	15	11	13	5	5	5

Teacher nine noted the importance of supporting students to come forward and report bullying by saying,

... bullying... is out of the teachers line of sight or it's going to be something that's usually done where they aren't a lot of adults involved or in situations where, electronically. Yeah or just that the kid is not going to get caught. So that's why we have to build on this trust so that the kids... feel safe enough and have enough trust to be able to come forward.

Teacher eight added, “I think you have to set that up in the beginning of the year in school.” However, the 2009 bully survey data indicate that if anything, eighth grade students were less likely to intervene than seventh grade students (see Table 7). These data suggest that such a culture of trust was not created for the students who matriculated into the school in the fall of 2007 and left in the spring of 2009.

The green team cited current efforts to encourage students to stop bullying each other. Green team leader three noted,

It'll be interesting to see like with this cool tool, and with, it's a powerful poem that we're doing, and how is this – and how are the kids going to respond to this, and especially using the kids in the video that we're using. I just think it's going to be a really good thing. And I think the kids are they're responsive when we're do things like this.

Green team member one explained discussing bullying through cool tools is important because

...if there is a child who has been bullied forever, and doesn't realize that they are being bullied or they have accepted the fact that this is how things are, that this is the norm for them. When they see this – when we talk about our cool tools, especially about bullying –and see that this is something that isn't right, it might click that way too, where “I am being bullied and maybe I should do something about it.” So I think that is a very positive step for us.

However, green team member three acknowledged,



... [SWPBS] is not a panacea; it is not going to fix everything. For example, talking about bullying, it's a really hard topic. It is really pervasive, a really hard conversation to have, how do you fix that? Schools all over the country are having issues with that right now – it was in *Newsweek*. But at least we are discussing it even though it isn't a comfortable situation, at least you are addressing it and you are working at it. So it's really good that way, that we are acknowledging and trying to address it in a uniform way because it is difficult and a lot of times you would rather not face the ugliness.

Green team member three added it is easier to discuss bullying with students due to SWPBS because

It gives you language to talk to the kids. ...Before I would just be kind of winging it, at least they're hearing the same language, which gives you the same language at least to talk about if you're not one of those people who can ...sit there and make this marvelous lesson... It's nice there's a common language.

Because of the common language and the fact that the school does take bullying seriously, "...a lot of teachers will say [if they see bullying], 'no that is not tolerated here. That's not going to happen.' So I think it has decreased a lot..." (green team leader 3). Indeed, the students indicated that teachers provide supervision and stop bullying they observe. For example, eighth grade student three said, "...teachers...are always walking around and usually catch bullying." However, the principal indicated that supervision in the hallways needed to improve because "...some of the comments that kids would make is that you know there are issues that are happening during the change of class time. That's an opportunity and I will constantly be reminding teachers to please be in the hallway..."

**External versus Internal.** While having more teachers around may reduce bullying, it may not stop bullying in their absence. As participants noted, bullying is

often out of adults' line of sight and thus difficult to control externally. Participants acknowledged that SWPBS has an external impact on behavior, but the impact on values that drive behavioral choices is more challenging to attain. Teacher two explained that "...the staff as a whole have done a really good job teaching this on an intellectual level, but I think we struggle harder to have the emotional impact, where we're internalizing it." Teacher two felt that SWPBS "...helps with students who want to avoid getting in trouble. I don't know that they're internalizing those values." Teacher one explained,

I think the kids can state what they are supposed to do and they know the expectations, but they don't always choose to follow them, like they choose to ignore the ways. They can tell you exactly what they did and what didn't follow but they still will do it anyways.

Students noted some students have self-control but choose not to use it "because they think it is fun to misbehave" (7<sup>th</sup> grade student 2), "...because they want the attention..." (7<sup>th</sup> grade student 2, eighth grade student 3), or "because they think it is funny" (8<sup>th</sup> grade student 1). There was also some debate as to whether students take responsibility for their actions when they misbehave. Green team leader three said, "I do think they take responsibility for their actions." However, eighth grade students felt that students do not take responsibility for their actions when they misbehave because they don't want to get in trouble. They blame each other (8<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Other Influences.** Participants also indicated factors outside the school's control impact behavior. As green team participant three noted, "SWPBS is not a panacea. It is not going to fix everything." Several teachers felt that social media and reality television impacts behavior. For example, teacher two noted and several agreed,

I think social media impacts empathy quite a lot. You get a lot more information but not time to have it affect you at that level. Also, a lot of the television is really encouraging narcissistic behavior and they emulate that.

Participants also identified age and personality as influencing behavior. Program assistant eight felt that the seventh grade students were more motivated to behave appropriately by the gotchas “because they are still at this immature stage, this motivation can still work for them.” Teacher four felt choice, impulsivity, and age influenced behavior. Teacher twelve indicated that students behave in accordance with the majority of their peers because “...junior high kids in general want to be conformists, they want to be with the majority.” Program assistant five felt that some students behave appropriately because “...that’s the nature of the kids’ personality, I don’t think it’s that ‘oh, I am gonna get a gotcha if I do this.’” Later, s/he added, “it’s just that’s because that’s just the type of person. And, you know, kids hold the door open for you. They would do that whether or not they would get a gotcha or not, that’s just their personality.” Eighth grade student one corroborated this perspective by saying, “I just don’t expect [a gotcha]. I just [help others out] to be nice. Not expecting a gotcha.” Finally, some teachers identified group dynamics as influencing behavior. For example, teacher twelve and nine noted “...certain groups are not as well-behaved as others” (teacher 12); “sometimes we get groups that are just, just the way you combine them and it is just the composition of the group that makes them that way” (teacher 9).

### **Academic Achievement**

Regardless of outside influences on behavior, the discipline data clearly indicates ODRs decreased significantly after the implementation of SWPBS. In addition, an

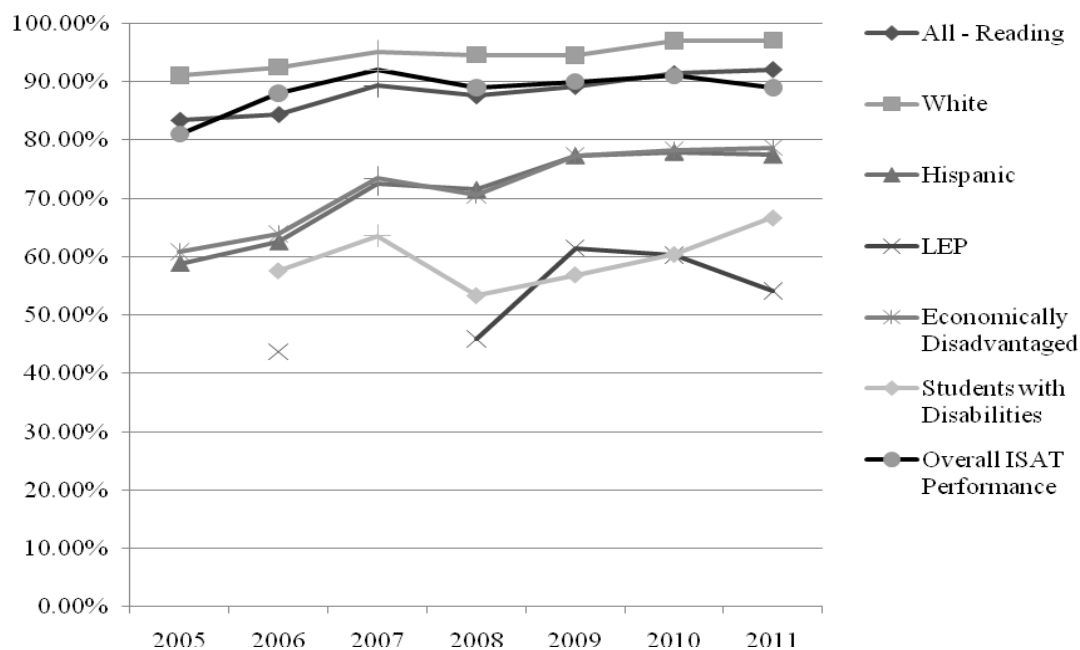
improvement in the percentage of students meeting standards on the ISAT occurred as ODRs dropped significantly in 2007 (see Figures 5 & 6 below for ISAT and Figures 2 & 3 for ODRs). The principal cited the data, noting “from 2004, which I believe 79% of our kids met ISAT standards, to 2010, 91%, so there was an increase in test scores and a decrease in office discipline referrals.” Green team leader three noted,

five years ago, we weren't making AYP, we were told we're like the black hole of the school district, um, just this was even four years ago, but you know, the parents were like 'I don't want my kids going to this school.' ...Now, it's like not even a question, even our subgroups are meeting standards.

In fact, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged subgroups depicted the greatest rate of improvement in the percentage meeting and exceeding standards on the ISAT in reading and math, especially between 2005 and 2007 when SWPBS was first implemented and especially in math (see Figure 5 for reading and Figure 6 for math).

One explanation provided for the relationship between SWPBS implementation, behavior, and high stakes test scores was students have more time to be in class learning and teachers have more time to teach because they do not need to spend their time engaged in the discipline process. The principal explained,

The reality is that a referral, when you think about the time it takes to think about the referral, to write the referral, to deliver the referral, and then the time it takes for the administrator to look at the referral, the time it takes for office staff to contact the student, and then the student comes down, um, that's a loss of academic learning time and it's a loss of teacher time.

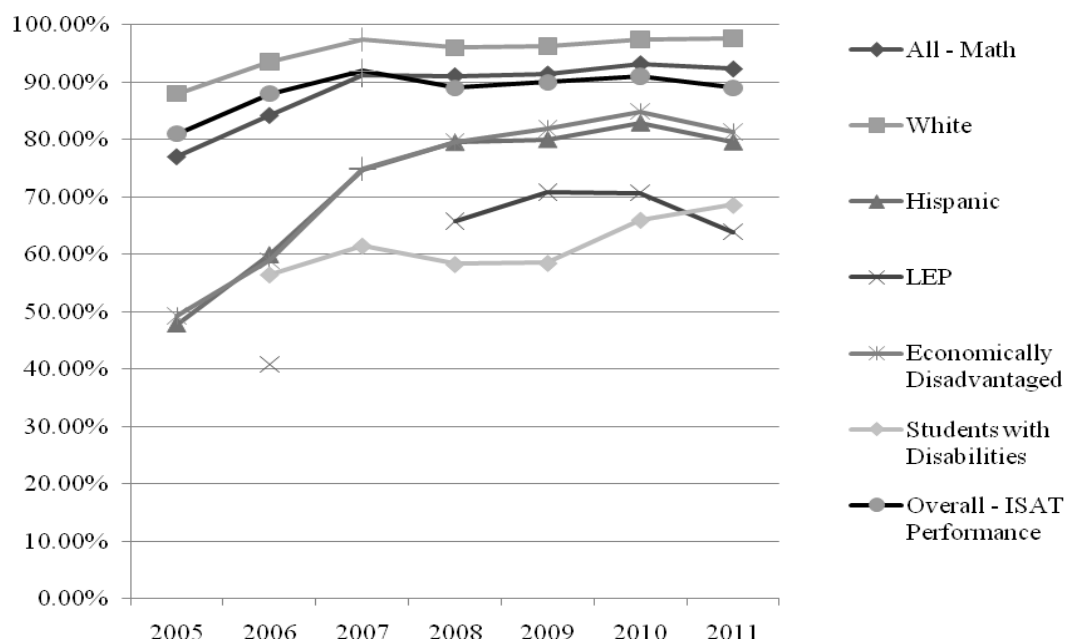


*Note.* A “+” indicates the year SWPBS was fully implemented and the school reached implementation fidelity.

Figure 5. The percent of students meeting and/or exceeding standards on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading and overall over time

In addition, green team leader three explained when they first began SWPBS implementation the school had

...a lot of referrals and a lot of just problem behaviors, is what it was, it was taking away from the learning in the classroom. The educational experience was being compromised which was part of why we brought this program into our school. ...I believe that ...reducing office referrals, there's more learning taking place in the classroom. ...We're not losing class time because of tardies. We're not losing class time because of disruption. ...So it's really the kids are learning, our test scores are going up constantly every single year, it's just it's an improvement all across the board.



*Note.* A “+” indicates the year SWPBS was fully implemented and the school reached implementation fidelity.

Figure 6. The percent of students meeting and/or exceeding standards on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) in math and overall over time

Green team member five noted reduced negative behavior allows for an increase in the amount of content teachers can teach.

...I would say that if you can cut down on the amount of problems you have in a classroom, the amount of discipline you have in a classroom – obviously we don’t have as many of those issues now that we would have previously – you are able to get through content much quicker and easier throughout the class. ... I am not spending a lot of time in my room going through a problem with a certain kid; I am able to teach the entire period.

Some participants cited the tardy policy as particularly influential in increasing teaching and learning time. For example, green team leader one noted, “... [SWPBS] has brought down tardies immensely. It’s important to get kids into class and seated

because” otherwise there are chronic disruptions and a loss of learning time. In addition, green team member two explained,

You have to stop if they are coming late and figure out, ok I have to go assign the tardy you know maybe, obviously you are still going to have tardies, but cutting down on that and kids being in class, I still think just common sense wise they are gonna get more out of class being in there than not being in there..

Teacher eight expressed, “...teachable time has increased, especially because tardies are taken care of.” Teacher twelve explained how the expectations and procedures associated with the tardy policy increased teachable time.

I think that it, because you have got that consistent classroom rules and expectations you are able to get your instruction done, beginning with the tardy implementation... They are told from get go, we are bell to bell. So you are able to teach more and get more time done in the class. Whereas before you might have had more time where you had to sit and talk to kids individually. Now it is just cut and dry. You’re tardy, you sign in, that’s it. So, it’s giving us more time for teaching.

In addition, green team leader two and green team member four felt reduced problem behavior resulted in students feeling more comfortable and safe at school, which they felt promotes academic achievement. Green team leader two explained students “could go into their classroom and be more successful because they weren’t worried about other things outside of the classroom,” such as their safety. S/he added,

I don’t think there is any doubt that when kids feel safe in school that they’re going to achieve more. It’s just, it just make sense to me. If I’m worried about, “oh, I’m going to lunch and I know I got a table right next to me where these guys are always riding me all the time,” I’m not, the class before that, I’m sitting there, that’s all I’m thinking of. So I think if everybody – it’s just creating a safe environment where everybody then can achieve more.

Similarly green team member four noted, "...when a student feels safe and comfortable in a classroom they are more likely to engage and learning is going to take place."

Finally, student and adult participants felt that expectations related to improved academic achievement. For example, teacher seven explained that SWPBS relates to improved academic achievement because "...as far as expectations like being responsible, we've kinda taught that that incorporates bringing materials to class, being ready to learn, having homework done and things like that." Seventh grade student two supported this point by saying that students who are getting bad grades are getting them because they are not acting responsibly.

### **Positive Climate**

In general, participants felt that SWPBS related to increased safety, actual and perceived. For example, green team leader one expressed that SWPBS "relates to safety a lot. You know you don't have the pushing, the shoving and running in the hallways. You're not having kids out there getting hurt and things happening." S/he added, "and I think as a whole they feel safer." Students agreed. According to the 2009 bully survey, 82% rated the statement "I am afraid to go to school" as never or hardly every true. Similarly, 82% indicated that, on average, they feel safe to very safe at the school. Ninety-five percent of students indicated they felt safe at the school in 2010, suggesting an improvement in students' perceptions of safety. During the focus groups, seventh and eighth grade students indicated they feel safe because of the Wildcat Ways guiding positive behavior, the presence of the school safety officer, and teachers monitoring behavior in the hallway.



Participants also felt that the clarity and consistency of the expectations and consequences associated with SWPBS help students feel as if they are treated fairly. Teacher twelve noted that SWPBS results in "...a lot less fighting with the kids" over the fairness of consequences. Green team leader one expressed, "I think they all feel... it's more equity based, it's not like, 'they get to do that and I don't.' We are all on the same level here." Teacher eleven expressed, "...there's no good cop bad cop 'oh, well, Mrs. so and so doesn't do this.'" Teacher thirteen added that SWPBS

...takes away the subjectiveness... You could bring in the matrix and say, "well look, were you really being respectful in the hallway? Because let's look at it, and it says these things. Were you doing this? Were you following that?" ...It takes out the arguing...

### **Relationships**

In general, participants felt relationships were positive between students, between students and teachers, and amongst staff. Seventh grade students indicated most students get along with their teachers and seventh and eighth grade students felt the relationships between students are mostly positive. The principal feels as if the relationships between students and teachers are much better than they were five or more years ago. In addition, green team member four explained,

I think when you look at the diversity of our school, there are a number of different languages that are spoken here, and just the broad range of kids that come from varied backgrounds and see the comfort level with which they interact, I would say there is something positive going on.

Some participants believed interactions are positive because of the core value "respect." The principal explained, "... I believe as a result of [SWPBS] I think kids have a better understanding that, you know, it is ok to be respectful of each other,

respectful again and tying that to a core value.” Teacher five explained, “...because one of the core values is respect, so you know, in a way we are encouraging [positive relationships].” Green team leader three also suggested the core value of respect relates to improved relationships amongst staff. S/he explained,

... [the principal] has said things to us in meetings, like the core values apply to us to, we need to be respectful of each other. ...I do think that has improved staff relations... It’s just creating this mutual respect because these are our core values too.

Some green team participants identified the cool tools themselves as facilitating positive interactions and relationships. Green team leader two thought cool tools “open up the line of communication [between teachers and students] a lot more, because we are talking to kids about more interpersonal things, the social/emotional learning aspect of things, and it’s just not all ...book, book, book, text...” Green team member six felt,

...what’s so great about cool tools... it’s ... allowing others to share their stories or share what they are seeing or share what a friend has been a part of... Discussion and not having anybody lead the conversation, but everybody is equal... It allows for a lot more positive relationships amongst everybody because we are all on the same boat.

A final aspect of SWPBS identified as facilitating positive interactions and relationships were celebrations. Teacher eleven felt that celebrations supported positive social interactions. S/he explained, “... we’ll have games or the kids will get to go out and be with their peers and interact and model their social behaviors.” Green team member six noted “...when we are able to celebrate the good things that we do, not just as a class but as an entire grade or an entire school...,” that allows for positive interactions between people who do not normally see each other.

## Engagement

**School in General.** With regard to being engaged in school, students indicated that one of the reasons they liked going to school were the celebrations. Green team participant five also explained, “I think having celebrations... with 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade... you’re going to get more students that become more liking to come to school...”

In 2009, students were asked to rate the truth of the following statement: “I like going to school.” However, the vast majority of seventh grade students (80%) and the majority of eighth grade students (51%) indicated they often or almost always liked going to school. While the majority of both grades indicated they liked going to school, more seventh than eighth grade students felt this way (see Figure 7). These results could relate to program assistant five’s observation that

... with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. It seems like the longer the year goes and the closer to graduation they start to get. It’s just in general, not just the [SWPBS], the homework, just anything, they’re just like “oh, you know graduation is in a month and” you know, they kind of just lost focus on anything school related like SWPBS, academics, or anything.

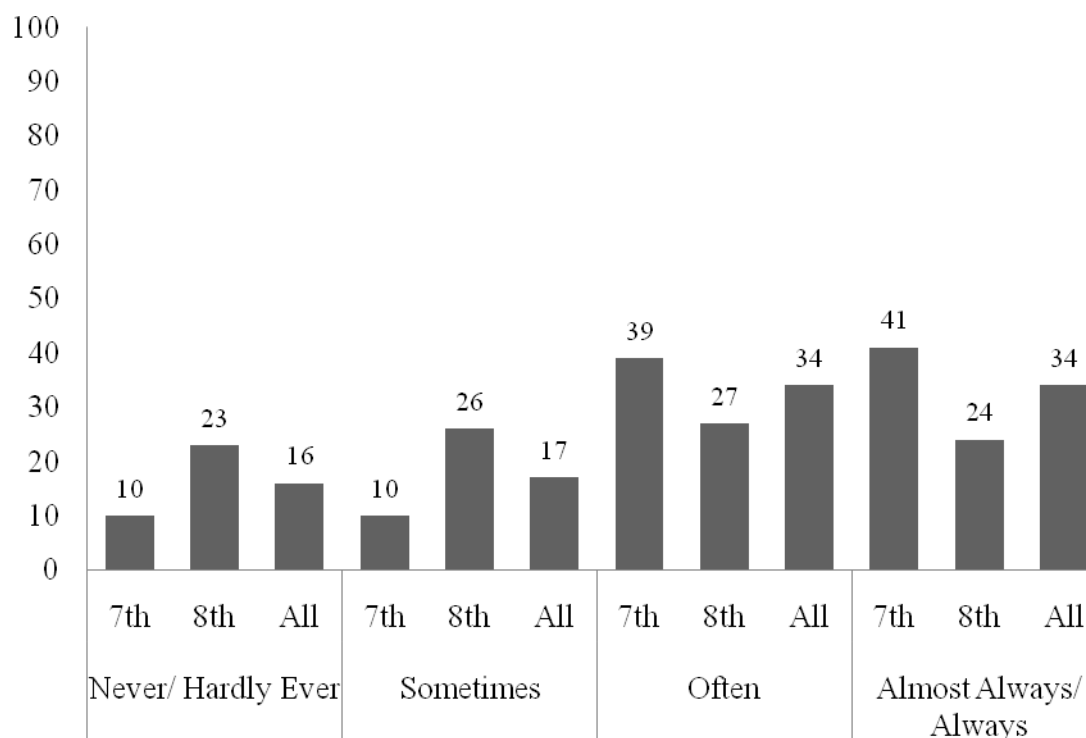


Figure 7. The percent of students who rated “I like going to school” as never or hardly ever true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always or always true by grade and overall

**Academic Engagement.** With regard to academics, teachers felt that SPWBS held students accountable to being engaged in class. For example, teacher eleven explained, “I think they are more engaged just because we got that accountability factor where if they are not acting through our core values we can call them on it and get them back on task.” Teacher eleven added,

It is almost like a force. You know you have to be here. This is part of school, and you are being held accountable, and you can’t just pretend to be here, because we are serious about your learning. From that aspect it holds them accountable. Whether they want to or not, I think that is, some kids, they just haven’t bought into school, but, it makes them think about it a little bit more and try a little bit. I do see more of an effort because of it.

On the other hand, teacher twelve felt SWPBS helped students be physically present in the room because they would prefer to be in the “classroom than what the alternative could be behavioral wise.” However, s/he didn’t “...feel it keeps them engaged in class because you are going to have kids who are just physically in the room. They are not mentally in the room.” Teachers twelve and thirteen felt that in order to truly engage students in academic instruction, they need to present interesting and enjoyable lessons.

Teacher thirteen explained,

I think that as far as the engaging part, I think that’s more up to the teacher and what lesson is presented. Because I have seen and I’ve presented myself lessons where kids are not engaged at all, but when I let them talk with their peers, or do something more interactive [they are more engaged]. ... I don’t necessarily see that as [SWPBS] but more of a teacher responsibility and how they conduct their class.

Thus, teachers felt that SWPBS could hold students externally accountable to being engaged, but students’ desire to be engaged in class comes from being interested in the material presented.

### **Summary**

The most significant relationship between SWPBS and student outcomes indicated by the data was between SWPBS and students’ involvement in discipline and an increase in the percent of students meeting and exceeding standards on the ISAT. Specifically, the performance of students identified as Hispanic and economically disadvantaged improved. Participants noted the increase in test scores related to a reduction in problem behavior, as reduced problem behavior allowed for a more positive learning environment and an increase in instructional time. Participants also felt clear

and consistent expectations for all students facilitated an improvement in academic achievement for all students.

To some extent, participants felt SWPBS related to improved relationships and engagement in school. Participants indicated that SPWBS related to improved relationships through teachers taking time to process behavior with students, acknowledging students, students having the opportunity to interact in a positive way during celebrations, and the core value of respect. They also felt that celebrations related to students liking to come to school. In addition, they suggested students were more engaged in class because they were more accountable to be in class, prepared, and on task. However, they wondered the extent to which students were internally motivated to achieve.

Other data was mixed. Some participants observed an increase in prosocial behavior in relationship to SWPBS implementation. Some felt that prosocial behavior was based on factors external to the school's control, such as personality, age, and values taught at home. Bullying remained a concern. Participants, especially students and those familiar with school-wide data on bullying, expressed concerns with the prevalence of bullying and questioned whether or not the core values guide behavior in the absence of adult supervision. That being said, the implementation of SWPBS did appear to relate to the school's goal to reduce problem behavior and increase academic achievement.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

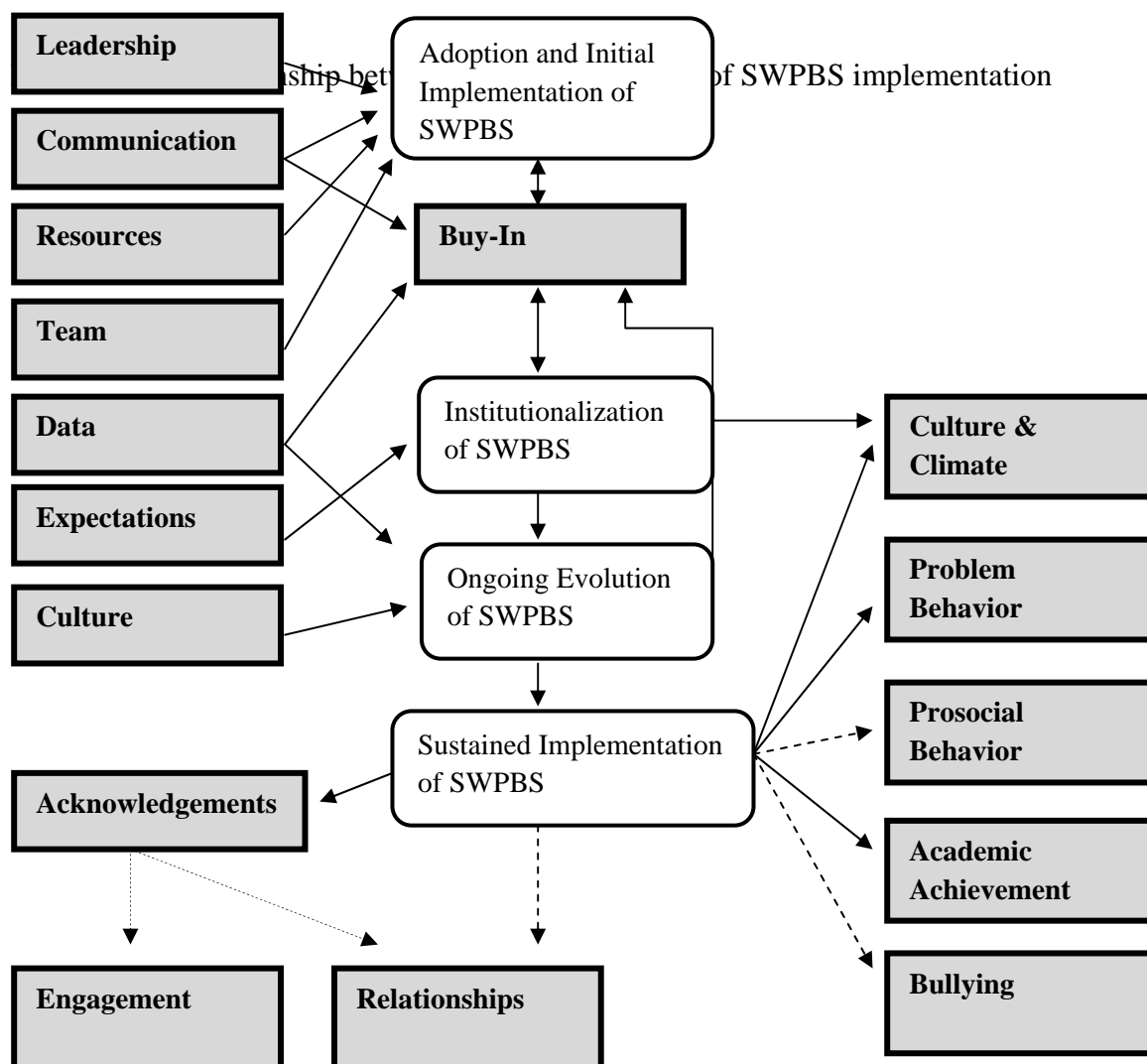
#### **Overview**

The discussion of results is also organized by research question. The discussion of research question one outlines the relationship between themes and phases of successful implementation of SWPBS. These phases – creating readiness, initial implementation, institutionalization, and ongoing evolution – are identified by Adelman and Taylor (2003, 2007) and further informed by systems change literature related and unrelated to SWPBS literature (e.g., McIntosh, Horner, & Sugai, 2009; Noell & Gansle, 2009). These phases are applied to the process of successfully implementing SWPBS at the school. Then, the discussion of research question two considers how the achievement of this systems change related to student outcomes (see Figure 8 for a summary of the relationship between themes and phases of SWPBS implementation).

#### **Research Question One**

As the principal noted, he was familiar with the process of systems change. Because he was familiar with how to effectively guide systems change, he was able to support the adoption and successful, sustained implementation of schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS). As the literature notes and the results depict, administrative support is critical to successful and sustained implementation of systems change, such as SWPBS (Adelman & Taylor, 2003, 2007; Doolittle, 2006; Flannery et al., 2009; Kincaid

et al., 2007; McIntosh et al., 2009). Thus, leadership was critical at all phases. In Figure 8, an arrow is drawn between a theme and the first point at which it was critical. Other critical features to successful and sustained implementation indicated by the participants, such as data, communication, and buy-in are also discussed as they relate to each phase of implementation.





### **Creating Readiness**

Adelman and Taylor (2003) describe creating readiness as motivating a critical mass of stakeholders to want to change by communicating information. McIntosh et al. (2009) suggest the motivating information should include an outcome that stakeholders desire to change and a connection between the system and the production of that outcome. Thus, the communication of data supports stakeholders in buying into change. Moreover, McIntosh et al. (2009) recommend communicating the connection of the systems change effort to the mission of a larger entity, such as a state board of education, in order to establish the effort as a priority. Flannery et al. (2009) found that the school administration identifying SWPBS as a priority and communicating this priority was critical to successful implementation. Essentially, the administration needs to create readiness by effectively marketing systems change (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

The principal's description of how s/he supported the adoption SWPBS is consistent with the aforementioned literature. S/he built interest and motivation to participate in SWPBS by communicating data depicting unsatisfactory behavior and academic achievement. S/he suggested that a proactive, problem-solving approach might help address these concerns. Moreover, s/he highlighted the connection between such an approach, SWPBS, and the social-emotional learning standards implemented by the state board of education. In sum, the principal identified SWPBS as a priority and effectively marketed this priority through the information and data s/he provided.

### **Initial Implementation**

Once the principal created initial readiness for change, s/he transitioned into initial implementation. Successful systems change efforts require stakeholder buy-in, and the gradual introduction of well-designed practices and procedures supports buy-in (Adelman & Taylor, 2003). Well-designed change is effective and efficient. The degree to which practices and procedures require additional time and effort on the part of teachers is inversely related to their buy-in and thus implementation of systems change (Noell & Gansle, 2009). Teachers will engage in procedures and practices they view as effective, especially if they make their jobs easier (Noell & Gansle). Indeed, time can be a barrier to SWPBS implementation (Kincaid et al., 2007). In addition, the creation of a “project mentality,” where the implementation of practices and procedures are viewed as limited in time can hinder the implementation of systems change because school stakeholders are unlikely to invest time in fleeting change (Adelman & Taylor, 2003). Finally, guidance and support by an internal or external coach (resources) and stakeholder feedback (communication and data) are critical during this phase (Adelman & Taylor; Kincaid et al., 2007)

Consistent with scholars’ recommendations, change was gradual, guided by the state network and a coach from this network, and incorporated stakeholder feedback. The principal transitioned from phase one by sending a potential green team leader to a meeting about SWPBS presented by the state network. Ostensibly, s/he was creating readiness by giving information, but s/he was also beginning to form the green team and connect to necessary resources in order to transition into initial implementation (Adelman

& Taylor, 2007). Indeed, the potential green team leader became a co-green team leader, as s/he recruited another staff member to co-lead. These co-leaders worked with a coach from the state network and the principal to identify a green team and arrange for the green team to be trained in SWPBS.

Then, the green team adapted SWPBS to their school's unique context with external guidance, consistent with Adelman and Taylor's (2003, 2007) recommendations. The green team received training tailored to the school's needs by an external coach from the state network. The coach also guided them through initial development and implementation of SWPBS. The green team did not reinvent the wheel, but they were thoughtful about how systems and practices would align to their school's unique needs. Consistent with Noell and Gansle's (2009) recommendations, they sought feedback in developing features of SWPBS, facilitating the contextual fit of SWPBS and ownership of stakeholders in the process of development and implementation.

Once the green team developed a few initial features of SWPBS, they gradually implemented them. The green team developed and implemented gotchas and schoolwide expectations as they applied to a few settings in the spring before fully rolling out SWPBS during the following August institute days. Throughout the process of development and implementation, the green team sought feedback from staff and incorporated their feedback, which helped them feel invested in the systems change effort. Furthermore, the principal avoided the adoption of a project mentality by correcting staff when they referred to SWPBS as a program. S/he emphasized that they were implementing systems, not programs.

As evidence of their attention to effective systems change, a year after the green team tested pieces of SWPBS and a year and a half after fully rolling out SWPBS, the school reached SWPBS implementation fidelity. The effectiveness and efficiency of SWPBS implementation at the school enabled successful implementation. The green team streamlined systems, such as the discipline and teaching systems, as part of the SWPBS implementation process. Thus, SWPBS implementation was efficient, and even made some existing procedures more efficient. In addition, the green team demonstrated SWPBS was effective by sharing data. They depicted through the data that SWPBS related to more time for classroom instruction. Teachers also observed the relationship between reduced problem behaviors, especially tardiness, and their ability to cover content in the classroom. Thus, teachers bought into and participated in SWPBS because the green team did not tax them with asking them to do too much too fast, they were involved and thus invested in its development, and they felt it helped them do their jobs.

### **Institutionalization**

Once successful implementation is maintained, a school enters phase three, institutionalization, where the system becomes enmeshed in the way the school operates (Adelman & Taylor, 2003, 2007). A system like SWPBS becoming “the way things are done” feeds back into buy-in by becoming part of the status quo. In order for systems change to become part of the way the school operates, infrastructure and capacity are critical (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Infrastructure and capacity are often developed prior to the institutionalization phase, but schools will struggle to institutionalize systems change without them.

Infrastructure mechanisms include teaming, procedures, and administrative support, which serve to facilitate change (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Flannery et al. (2009) found that infrastructure mechanisms, such as regular team meetings, facilitated successful SWPBS implementation. McIntosh et al. (2009) define capacity building as cultivating the expertise of implementers through training and skill building. Cultivating expertise is critical for leaders of implementation as well as school stakeholders involved in implementation. Personnel need knowledge and skills in order to be part of the SWPBS implementation effort (McIntosh et al.). Indeed, participants in Flannery et al.'s (2009) study identified access to training and professional development, especially on the part of the green team, as facilitators to SWPBS implementation.

The principal and initial green team leaders created infrastructure by ensuring the green team supporting SWPBS implementation represented school stakeholders. The green team included a member from each teaching team, administrators, a program assistant, and a parent, which facilitated communication to and from the green team. Regular team meetings and the establishment of communication procedures (e.g., via meeting minutes) also facilitated the green team's ability to engage in effective communication. Effective communication allowed the green team to receive and react to feedback so that staff felt included in the process. The green team also communicated critical procedures and reminders to school stakeholders so that implementation of SWPBS was smooth. Consistent schedules for communication supported by the principal, such as Monday announcements and monthly staff meetings, also provided a consistent structure that supported the institutionalization of SWPBS. Finally, the

principal and green team created infrastructure by ensuring systems, such as the discipline referral process and teaching of the matrix, were consistent and smooth.

The principal built capacity by ensuring the initial green team, administrators, and all green team leaders were formally trained by the state network. The principal also built capacity by supporting the initial green team in having co-leaders. A co-leader structure enhanced the capacity of green team leaders to facilitate the time consuming process of initial SWPBS development and implementation. As aspects of SWPBS implementation and systems of communication became routine, leading the green team became a less demanding role. However, the green team, at the recommendation of their coach from the state network, also built capacity by rotating leaders and team members in and out of the green team. Involvement in systems change can be time-consuming and thus over-relying on individuals to lead change efforts could result in burn-out. Or, over-relying on individuals to lead change efforts could result in the efforts failing when these individuals leave (McIntosh et al., 2009).

In addition, the principal and the green team provided staff with the capacity to implement practices associated with SWPBS by teaching and reviewing SWPBS implementation during August institute days. When SWPBS was not adequately reviewed during August institute days, staff took note and indicated they felt lost during the first few months of school. Finally, the principal built capacity by ensuring new hires at least supported the philosophy behind SWPBS, if not SWPBS itself, thereby expanding the population of individuals who bought in to the systems change effort.

Arguably, the principal and the green team also fostered institutionalization of SWPBS by engraining features of SWPBS into the culture of the school. They named their schoolwide expectations – Wildcat Ways, core values, and common language – in a manner that highlighted their centrality to the way the school operates. Consistent communication of these expectations, modeled by the green team and principal, supported their incorporation into the language of the school. Thus, they are central to the school institution in name and practice. Indeed, McIntosh et al. (2009) note that institutionalization of SWPBS is supported by connecting SWPBS to the core values of the school.

Further evidence of the incorporation of SWPBS into the way the school operates included the presence of the philosophy of SWPBS in staff and schoolwide practice. Teachers indicated that they now try and focus on and reward positive behavior as opposed to getting frustrated by negative behavior. When the school completes “plus/delta’s” in order to evaluate practices, they focus on what went well and what needs to be changed, not on what went wrong. The school focuses on building a positive culture and avoids ruminating on problems.

### **Ongoing Evolution**

In addition to building and adopting a positive culture, the school adopted a culture of continuous improvement. By adopting a culture of continuous improvement, the school depicted the achievement of phase four, ongoing evolution (Adelman & Taylor, 2003, 2007). Adelman and Taylor (2003) describe ongoing evolution as the development of a community of implementers who are constantly learning from

experience, feedback, and data using this information in order to improve the system. Similarly, McIntosh et al. (2009) identify continuous regeneration, the improvement of systems and practices over time while keeping critical features intact, as critical to sustained implementation of SWPBS. Continuous regeneration is possible only if teams consistently review data and staff feedback and use it in a formative manner (McIntosh et al., 2009). Likewise, Flannery et al. (2009) found that successful and sustained SWPBS implementation was facilitated by the consistent and efficient use of data systems.

Participants indicated the green team regularly reviews multiple sources of data, the process of collecting and entering data is streamlined, and the green team and principal regularly communicate and discuss data with students and staff. Then, the green team and principal use this process of gathering and problem-solving around data and feedback to improve SWPBS implementation every year, even though the school has been at implementation fidelity for several years. By improving SWPBS every year and engaging stakeholders in the process, SWPBS implementation reportedly remains fresh and interesting and stakeholders feel invested in the process, which further facilitates stakeholder buy-in.

### **Sustained Implementation**

According to McIntosh et al. (2009), sustained implementation differs from maintained implementation. Sustained implementation requires continual evaluation of systems and practices and subsequent evolution in their effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, maintenance is the continuation of implementation without problem-



solving or change (McIntosh et al., 2009). By engaging in ongoing evolution, the school depicted sustained implementation.

Now that more schools have been implementing SWPBS for several years, researchers are beginning to examine variables that influence sustained implementation. McIntosh et al. (2010) developed an instrument to measure predictors of SWPBS sustainability. Prior research on barriers and facilitators to implementation fidelity and sustainability (e.g., Flannery et al., 2009; Kincaid et al., 2007) as well as research on the relationship between the presence of SET features and sustained implementation (Doolittle, 2006) informed the development of their instrument.

Doolittle (2006) found that an acknowledgement system, active administrative support, regular team meetings, and ongoing problem solving predicted sustained implementation. The school depicted all of these features. The school could further develop their acknowledgement system so that all students buy in to all of its features, but the school does have a system for acknowledging positive behavior with at least one feature that most enjoy – celebrations. The school also has regular team meetings where the green team regularly engages in data-based problem-solving. In addition, the green team and principal engage in problem-solving with the staff when they share data at monthly staff meetings.

A pilot study of the survey developed by McIntosh et al. (2010) indicated that the establishment of SWPBS as a priority and its effectiveness and efficiency predicted sustained implementation fidelity as measured by the SET. The school also depicted these features. The principal effectively established SWPBS as a priority during phase

one, creating readiness. During initial implementation and later phases, the principal and green team communicated that SWPBS was effective by sharing data. The principal and green team also made SWPBS efficient by gradually introducing practices and streamlining discipline processes and the teaching of expectations. In addition, they made SWPBS efficient by making it part of the way the organization runs during institutionalization. Finally, the school ensured that SWPBS implementation evolved as a more effective and efficient system during phase four, ongoing evolution.

### **Summary**

Participants' descriptions of SPWBS development, implementation, and sustainment were consistent with recommendations from the systems change and SWPBS literature. Thus, the present study adds to and supports the preliminary literature on factors influencing the successful sustainment of SWPBS implementation.

Administrative support was critical. The principal actively supported SWPBS implementation throughout the phases of systems change, and skillfully guided the school through these phases. Communication and data were also critical and interrelated. The principal and green team enabled successful and sustained implementation through effective and consistent communication and use of data. Communication and data informed the creation and further development of realistic and effective practices.

Moreover, the green team is supported by an infrastructure that gives the green team the capacity to work with staff to develop and augment effective and efficient practices and procedures. Staff have the capacity to participate in SWPBS because training and support provided by the principal and green team. Thus, the effectiveness

and efficiency of SWPBS implementation and access to training and resources are critical. As indicated by participants, the challenge for the school moving forward is to maintain administrative support and continue to evolve so that they continue to sustain SWPBS, rather than maintain SWPBS.

### **Research Question Two**

The literature clearly indicates the relationship between SWPBS implementation, reductions in problem behaviors (Bohanon et al., 2006; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2006; Muscott et al., 2008; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Simonsen et al., 2012; Spaulding et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2006). The literature also suggests it relates to improved academic achievement (Horner et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2006; Sailor et al., 2006; Scott & Barrett, 2004; Simonsen et al., 2012), although the one experimental study of SWPBS implementation did not find a significant improvement in academic achievement (Horner et al., 2009). The argument for the relationship between SWPBS and improved academic achievement presented in the literature and by participants in the present study is that less time spent in discipline relates to more opportunities for academic instruction

Several SWPBS researchers also suggest SWPBS implementation contributes to improved school climate, increased prosocial behavior, safe learning environments, and academic engagement (Childs et al., 2007; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2009; Office of Special Education Programs, 2010). However, these researchers measure prosocial behavior and climate using the same methods they use to measure problem behavior, office discipline referrals (ODRs). While reductions in

problem behaviors may make a school safer, the one experimental study on SWPBS implementation did not find significant differences in perceptions of safety (Horner et al., 2009). Warren et al. (2003) found that teachers felt SWPBS practices resulted in more positive interactions between students, but it is not clear how this data was collected.

Thus, one goal of the present study was to understand how sustained SWPBS implementation relates to signs of well-being, in addition to positive behavior and academic achievement. Additional signs examined include engagement in school, positive relationships, positive climate, and minimal victimization (bullying). Schoolwide positive behavior support is a transformative intervention that targets a school community and, according to the literature, has the potential to relate to these signs of well-being at individual, relational, and communal sites (see Table 9 for a summary of the signs of well-being examined at these sites).

The potential of SWPBS is exciting because promoting multiple signs of well-being at multiple sites can interact to create a sum that is larger than its parts (Prilleltensky, 2005). However, sites and signs of well-being are not mutually exclusive. As noted in chapter two, academic achievement, behavior, victimization, climate, relationships, and engagement have complex interrelationships. Moreover, a sign of well-being at the personal site can impact well-being at the communal site. For example, the degree to which a child experiences bullying will likely relate to the degree to which bullying is observed. Because sites and signs are distinct but interrelated, addressing one site or sign while failing to address the other could be counter-productive to the promotion of well-being. On the other hand, addressing multiple sites and signs can have

a positive, snowballing impact on well-being. What follows is an examination of how the sustained implementation of SWPBS at the school impacted the signs of well-being – behavior, academic achievement, engagement in school, relationships, and a positive climate – at multiple sites (see Table 9).

Table 9. Signs of Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites

Signs of Well-Being	
Behavioral	
Personal	Follows Behavioral Expectations; Has Self-Control; Takes Responsibility for Behavior
Relational	Helps and is Helped; Does not Bully and is not Bullied
Communal	Most Students Behave Appropriately; Minimal Witnessing of Bullying
Academic	
Personal	Feels that S/he does well Academically
Communal	Most Students are doing well Academically, with Minimal Disparities
Engagement	
Personal	Like School; Like Academic Classes
Relational	Wants to be with Friends at School
Communal	Feels most Students Like School and Classes
Relational	
Personal	Has Positive Relationships
Relational	Gets Along with Others; Does not and is not Bullied
Communal	Experiences Members of the School Getting Along
Climate	
Personal	Feels Safe and free from Bullying
Relational	Minimal Threats to Safety or Bullying; Does not Threaten or Bully others
Communal	Does not Witness others being Victimized or Bullied Feels Consequences are Fair

**Behavior**

Consistent with the SWPBS literature, SWPBS implementation related to a significant, school-wide reduction in problem behavior, especially tardiness. Tardiness comprised the vast majority of ODRs prior to the tardy policy and comprised less of a majority of ODRs after implementation of the policy. The implementation of the tardy policy related to a significant decrease in ODRs due to the significant decrease ODRs for tardiness. The tardy policy is a streamlined procedure for managing tardiness with consistent and incremental punishments for tardiness. Thus, consistent enforcement via negative consequences of a clearly communicated policy appeared to clearly impact behavior. Clear and consistent consequences for negative behavior are a component of SWPBS, and thus there is very strong evidence that SWPBS related to this impact on behavior. However, the dramatic reduction in tardiness in response to the tardy policy indicates that avoiding punishment may have had more of a relation to reductions in problem behavior than a desire for rewards for behaving appropriately.

That being said, participants indicated students were motivated to be on time to class by school-wide goals related to reductions in tardiness tied to celebrations. In addition, other categories of ODRs decreased as well. A logical conclusion is that a reduction in tardiness played a significant role in the reduction of ODRs, but not the only role.

Data regarding other behavioral signs of well-being were more tenuous. While the SWPBS literature suggests that SWPBS implementation relates to increased prosocial behavior (Childs et al., 2007; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2009; McIntosh et al.,

2009; Office of Special Education Programs, 2010), participants' perspectives on the increase in prosocial behavior was less certain, as depicted by a dashed line between sustained implementation of SWPBS and prosocial behavior in Figure 8. Some participants observed an increase in helping behavior, a component of prosocial behavior. Of note is that expressions of gratitude, which can come in the form of thanking students for helpful behavior paired with a gotcha, relates to increased prosocial behavior in the future (Grant & Gino, 2010). Thus, it is possible that SWPBS related to an increase in helping behavior. Others felt that prosocial behavior, such as helping behavior, was due to personality, age, and values taught at home.

**Bullying.** While problem behavior decreased and helping behavior may have increased, participants expressed concerns with the prevalence of bullying and questioned whether or not the core values guide behavior in the absence of adult supervision. Participants, especially student participants, and existing data indicated bullying was a concern in the absence of adult supervision. That being said, in 2009 more seventh grade students indicated they experienced bullying than eighth grade students, which could suggest that bullying decreases as students internalize the core values. Or, consistent with research on bully rates (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Brown, Birch, & Kancherla, 2005), bullying may simply decrease as students age.

Of note is that the survey data suggests the school in the present study has lower rates of bullying than the national average. A survey of four middle schools conducted by Pergolizzi et al. (2009) found 45% of students reported experiencing bullying at least a little of the time. In Bradshaw et al.'s (2007) study, a survey of elementary through

high school students in a district, about half of students reported they experienced bullying in the past month. In Brown et al.'s (2005) study, a survey students ages nine through thirteen, 52.4% of 11 year-olds, 41.2% of 12 year-olds, and 35.4% of 13 year-olds reported they were bullied. In contrast, the percent of seventh grade students at the school in the present study who reported bullying in 2009 was at 29% and the percent of eighth grade students who reported bullying was at 16%. In 2009, 22% of students reported experiencing bullying overall. Similarly, the percent of students who reported bullying in 2010 was at 23%, which is in-between the rates for seventh and eighth grade students in 2009.

While the number of students who witnessed bullying at the school was concerning, it was also lower than the rates presented in the literature. At the school in the present study, just under half of the students reported witnessing bullying in 2009 and 2010. In contrast, Bradshaw et al. (2007) found that 70% of students witnessed bullying in the past month. Moreover, Pergolizzi et al. (2009) found that only 16% of students reported never witnessing bullying.

The comparison between bullying experienced and witnessed between the present study and the literature suggests that bullying was less frequent at the school in the present study. Indeed, participants indicated that the school addresses bullying specifically through cool tools and that adults take bullying seriously and stop it when they see it. While it seems that there are some reductions in bullying as students move out of the middle school years (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2005), the reductions in bullying at the school between the seventh and eighth grade could relate to SWPBS as



well. Students matriculate into the school beginning in seventh grade and the bully surveys were conducted in the fall. Perhaps seventh grade students had not yet learned not to bully through the Wildcat Ways and cool tools while the eighth grade students already had these learning opportunities.

In 2009, in contrast, eighth grade students indicated they were less likely to step in and help someone who was being bullied than seventh grade students, suggesting that they did not internalize the core values and/or valued avoiding being bullied themselves more than helping someone else who was being bullied. Students indicated they were reluctant to report bullying to adults because they feared retaliation from the bully. An eighth grade student also indicated students do not report bullying they witness because they do not see it as their problem. Student participants' indication that students do not report bullying because they fear retaliation suggests they value avoiding bullying more than helping others who are being bullied. The suggestion that students do not report bullying because they feel it is not their problem suggests poor internalization of core values.

However, a reluctance to intervene is not unique to the school in the present study. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) found that over half of the students reported they did nothing the last time they witnessed bullying and that the most common rationale was that it was not their business. That being said, if SWPBS relates to prosocial behavior, one would hope that this finding would not hold true in a school implementing sustained SWPBS.

**External versus Internal Control of Behavior.** Many participants wondered whether or not students internalized the Wildcat Ways. Adult participants indicated they can teach behavioral expectations, but supporting the internalization of the values and emotions behind these expectations is much more difficult. Thus, one might expect that successful SWPBS implementation does not directly lead to the development of the social cognitions and emotions necessary for socially responsible behavior. Bear et al. (2003) suggest responsible behavior is internally driven by social cognitions about the welfare of others and social emotions such as empathy, guilt and shame. External supervision, rewards, and punishment do not direct socially responsible behavior, although they may produce behavior that looks socially responsible (Bear et al., 2003).

Student participants' responses suggested their behavior was externally driven. Students and adults indicated that students have self-control but sometimes choose not to use it. They did not indicate that the presence of self-control related to SWPBS implementation. Students suggested they choose not to use self-control because sometimes it is more rewarding to misbehave than to behave. Students indicated that when they exercise self-control in the face of potential misbehavior, they do so in order to avoid getting in trouble. Furthermore, students indicated when they misbehave and get caught they blame others in order to avoid getting in trouble. Students did not feel students took responsibility for their actions. These data combined with the data on students' likelihood to address bullying when they see it suggest SWPBS may not relate to the development of socially responsible behavior because students appear to be motivated by the potential for rewards and punishments for themselves as opposed to the

welfare of others. At least students indicated that, for the most part, students behave appropriately, indicating the external control is successful in managing behavior.

**Summary.** In sum, SWPBS implementation at this school appeared to relate to students, for the most part, behaving appropriately. Schoolwide positive behavior support effectively managed behavior and created a climate where most students followed the behavioral expectations. Moreover, some participants felt that SWPBS related to increase in helping behavior. However, it does not seem as if SWPBS helped students develop the skills necessary engaging in socially responsible decision-making. Although, it seems possible that SWPBS supported a reduction in bullying. On the other hand, students who witnessed bullying did not indicate they would engage in the socially responsible behavior of reporting bullying to adults (see Table 10 for a summary of the impact of SWPBS on behavioral signs of well-being at multiple sites).

Table 10. Achievement of Behavioral Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites

	Behavior	Achieved?
Personal	Follows Behavioral Expectations	Yes
	Has Self-Control	Yes, not by SWPBS
	Takes Responsibility for Behavior	No
Relational	Helps and is Helped	Partial
	Does not Bully and is not Bullied	Partial
Communal	Most Students Behave Appropriately	Yes
	Minimal Witnessing of Bullying	No

### **Academic Achievement**

As SWPBS was implemented, academic achievement improved according to the percentage of students meeting/exceeding standards on the ISAT and participant observation. Students felt that most students were doing well academically. The performance of students identified as Hispanic and of economic disadvantage improved on the Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) over the years of SWPBS implementation, especially in math. Similarly, Simonsen et al. (2012) found that schools that implemented SWPBS with fidelity had significantly higher ISAT scores in math than schools that did not. That being said, these data could be coincidental. These data could also relate to other systemic efforts and interventions implemented by the school at the same time as SWPBS. For example, at the time of SWPBS implementation, the school was also implementing RtI in order to address students' academic needs. However, participants related improvements in academic achievement to SWPBS implementation by noting that the reduction in problem behavior, especially tardiness, gave the teachers more time to teach and the students more time to learn. They also indicated SWPBS related to improved academic achievement through the creation of a safe learning environment where students could focus on academics and an expectation that all students are responsible and prepared (see Table 11 for a summary).

Of note is that the achievement gap between students identified as Hispanic and economically disadvantaged and students identified as white appeared to decrease over years of SWPBS implementation. Participants did not offer much explanation as to why the gap is closing, other than to say that SWPBS related to higher expectations, a safer

learning environment, and more instructional time for everyone (see Table 11 for a summary).

Table 11. Achievement of Academic Well-Being at Personal and Communal Sites

	Academic Achievement	Achieved?
Personal	Feels that S/he does well Academically	Yes
Communal	Most Students are doing well Academically, with minimal Disparities between Groups	Partial

### **Engagement in School**

In general, students indicated they liked coming to school because the school provides fun activities and celebrations. Adult participants also speculated that celebrations could enhance students' liking of school. However, participants' responses and survey data from the spring of 2009 indicate that while the majority of eighth and seventh grade students indicated they liked school, many more seventh grade students felt this way than eighth grade students. These data could suggest that the process of SWPBS does not relate to or reduces engagement in school. Or, they could suggest that by the spring, eighth grade students are less engaged because they are preparing to separate from the school and move on to high school (see Table 12 for a summary).

However, it did not appear that SWPBS implementation related to students having and increased drive to engage in academics. Teachers indicated students' behavior was consistent with academic engagement, but their behavior occurred because they were behaviorally accountable to act engaged. Moreover, Teachers felt that SWPBS could not

relate to academic engagement. They felt it was their responsibility to engage students in academic content (see Table 12 for a summary).

Table 12. Engagement in School at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites

	Engagement	Achieved?
Personal	Like School; Like Academic Classes	Partial
Relational	Wants to be with Friends at School	Yes
Communal	Feels most Students Like School and Classes	Partial

## Relationships

Adult participants indicated the core value of respect, celebrations, and cool tools supported the development of positive relationships between students, students and staff, and staff because they related to more opportunities for positive interactions. In addition, teachers felt they engaged in fewer arguments with students over consequences because SWPBS made expectations and consequences clear and consistent. In general, adult participants felt relationships improved over the course of SWPBS implementation.

While bullying was a concern highlighted through bully surveys, focus groups, and interviews, students felt that, overall, students and staff get along. Moreover, adult participants noted students who would not normally interact positively due to interpersonal differences now help each other and actively treat each other with respect. Since participants indicated that for the most part members of the school interact positively, it could be assumed that members of the school have positive relationships, but this variable was not explicitly measured (see Table 13 for a summary).

Table 13. Relational Well-Being at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites

	Relationships	Achieved?
Personal	Has Positive Relationships	Unknown
	Gets Along with Others	Yes
Relational	Does not Bully	Partial
	Is not Bullied	Partial
Communal	Feels Members of the School Getting Along	Yes

### Positive Climate

The majority of students indicated they felt safe at school in 2009 and 2010, with the percentage of students indicating they felt safe increasing between these years. Students also indicated they felt safe during the focus groups. Students identified specific aspects of SWPBS that made them feel safe, such as the expectations and supervision in the hallway. However, students indicated during focus groups that bullying occurs in the absence of adult supervision. Thus, while students feel safe, bullying still poses a threat to the student climate. Finally, teachers indicated that students are better able to accept consequences when they receive them because the expectations are clear and the consequences are consistent and evenly applied. Teachers felt that students would be more likely to describe discipline as fair now than before SWPBS (see Table 14 for a summary).

Table 14. Climate at Personal, Relational, and Communal Sites

	Climate	Achieved?
Personal	Feels Safe and free from Bullying	Partial
	Feels Consequences are Fair	Yes
Relational	Does not Experience Threats to Safety or Bullying	Partial
	Does not Threaten or Bully others	Partial
Communal	Does not Witness others being Victimized or Bullied	No

### Summary

By no means did this study examine all the signs of well-being at individual, relational, and communal sites that SWPBS could possibly impact. However, the study confirms SWPBS implementation's relationship to some signs of well-being already demonstrated in the literature and provides a further understanding of its relationship to other signs of well-being. As the literature and this study demonstrates, SWPBS implementation relates to reduced problem behavior as measured by ODRs. There is some suggestion that SWPBS related to improved academic achievement as measured by high stakes test scores and participant observations, although the relationship is uncertain. The present study added to the literature by demonstrating the change in ODRs and perhaps academic achievement is most dramatic at the beginning of sustained implementation. In addition, the significant change in ODRs occurred when the top referral category in a middle school, tardiness, was specifically addressed. The impact on ODRs, and perhaps academic achievement, sustains as long as implementation sustains.

Other signs of well-being the present study examined included relationships, prosocial behavior, engagement in school, and climate. The present study shed some



light on the relationship between sustained SWPBS implementation and these signs of well-being, suggesting that it could relate to these signs to some degree, but more evidence is necessary moving forward. Of particular interest moving forward is the degree to which SWPBS relates to internally driven prosocial behavior and bullying.

### **Conclusions**

Prilleltensky (2001) proposed four questions to guide community psychologists in promoting social justice: “What should be the case? What is the case? What is missing and what is desired? and What can be done” (p. 762)? A social justice foundation for school psychology practice requires school psychologists to critically evaluate the intervention selected to bridge the gap between “what should be the case” and “what is the case.” Even thoughtfully designed interventions grounded in research can be miscalculated, have gaps in their impact, or continue to perpetuate oppression and/or inequities. In addition to evaluating outcomes, a social justice foundation directs school psychologists to consider the process, as the drive for successful outcomes must be balanced with respect for the school’s context. In evaluating SWPBS through a social justice lens, North’s (2006) model, Griffiths (1998) conceptualization of social justice in and from schools, and Shriberg et al.’s (2008) definition of social justice as it applies to school psychology practice provide a map. When applying the questions outlined by Prilleltensky (2001) and the conceptual map provided by the literature, it appears that the school moved closer to promoting social justice but still has the potential for further growth.

When the principal started working at the school, s/he felt that problem behavior needed to decrease and that academic achievement needed to increase. S/he also felt that the school had an obligation to support the social-emotional needs of the students. A proactive approach to addressing problem behavior was missing. S/he felt that if discipline problems were reduced, students would be able to spend more time in the classroom, s/he would have more time to be an instructional leader, and thus academic achievement would increase. S/he also felt that supporting students' social-emotional needs would relate to improved behavior and academic achievement. The principal identified the implementation of SWPBS as a proactive intervention that could distribute resources in such a way that the behavioral, social-emotional, and academic needs of all students could be met. Thus, according to North's (2006) model, the principal directed attention to redistribution of resources and a macro approach that initially treated all students the same. In addition, the principal appeared focused on achieving "social justice in schools" (Griffiths, 1998) first.

Arguably, the principal balanced redistribution and recognition (North, 2006) when moving towards systems change by respecting the perspectives and needs of school stakeholders while redistributing resources to create effective and efficient systems. The principal believed school-wide systems needed to be in place in order to effectively and efficiently meet student needs (redistribution), but also realized that systems change takes time and effort and thus stakeholder buy-in was critical. The principal obtained buy-in by respecting school stakeholders (recognition). S/he actively communicated with them and involved them in the process, ensuring that changes made also reflected their

conceptualization of school needs and their human capacity to participate in change. S/he also kept them engaged in a drive to meet needs by ensuring the regular communication of data. The communication of data enabled staff to see the impact of their efforts as well as engage in problem-solving around how to distribute resources in order to further meet student needs.

In addition to balancing redistribution and recognition, the principal's approach to systems change was consistent with recommendations in the systems change and SWPBS literature. McIntosh et al.'s (2009) model outlining the critical factors to SWPBS sustainability includes establishing SPBWS as a priority, ensuring practices are effective and that staff understand their effectiveness through data, ensuring practices are efficient, and engaging in continuous regeneration of systems and practices using a data-based decision-making process. The school depicted these critical factors, thus adding to the literature by providing some evidence in support of this yet untested model.

Moreover, McIntosh et al. (2009) note that sustained implementation of SWPBS relates to improved outcomes over time. The present study demonstrated significant reductions in problem behavior as SWPBS implementation was sustained, and these reductions maintained over time. The disparity in academic success also closed as SWPBS implementation sustained, but it is difficult to relate this to SWPBS because of other school initiatives that could be present at the time and the inability to link academic and behavior data. However, participants argued that SWPBS helped support a positive learning environment that furthered academic success for all students. Thus, the school moved closer to the behavioral ideal and the academic ideal, but relationship between the

behavioral ideal and SWPBS has more support than the relationship between the academic ideal and SWPBS.

The principal also indicated a desire to support students' social-emotional needs. To some extent SWPBS supported the school in moving closer to this ideal. Participants cited, for the most part, improved and positive relationships and that they felt safe at school. In explaining the reason for improved and positive relationships, participants cited the core value of respect. In addition, participants suggested their observations of helping behavior increased over SWPBS implementation. Finally, teachers indicated that students were more likely to perceive consequences as fair since the implementation of SWPBS given clear and consistent expectations and consequences. Thus, data suggest the school moved closer to an environment where social and emotional needs are addressed in the school.

If social justice as it applies to practice is defined as state of affairs where "all individuals and groups must be treated with fairness and respect and that all are entitled to the resources and benefits that the school has to offer" (Shriberg et al., 2008 p. 455), then the school moved closer to social justice. Participants indicated they felt treated respectfully throughout the process of development and implementation. In addition, they noted relationships improved and were positive in relation to the expectation that they treat each other with respect. Participants also indicated students felt as if they were treated fairly. Finally, more students received the academic resources and benefits of the school as behavior became less of an interference in accessing the curriculum.

However, data suggested room for improvement in terms promoting social justice from the school. The school's support of students' social-emotional growth that would relate to social justice beyond school walls could improve. Data on the relationship between SWPBS and students' desire engage in learning and social-moral reasoning as it relates to bullying were uncertain. Participants were unsure if students were actually more engaged in class and in school or if they just liked the school because of the celebrations. In addition, a comparison between the school's data on bullying and the literature on bullying suggest the school had lower rates of bullying, but given that this data is only available for a few years connecting it with SPWBS is difficult. In addition, student and adults participants expressed concern with the prevalence of bullying in the absence of adult supervision and the reluctance of students to intervene when they witness bullying, suggesting needed growth in social-moral reasoning.

Indeed, participants wondered if students were internalizing the values taught by SWPBS. In order for SWPBS to achieve social justice from schools, students would need to internalize the values it teaches in order to continue to behave beyond school walls in ways that respect the needs and rights of others. However, if the goal is for students internalize the values taught by SWPBS, then a social justice perspective would require one to consider who has the power to describe those values (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Requiring students of multiple cultural backgrounds to internalize the values defined by a school could further the oppression of certain cultures.

One way to address a cultural power imbalance in defining and describing values is to engage in culturally responsive SWPBS (see Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, &

Swain-Bradway, 2011). In culturally responsive SWPBS, staff engage in critical self-reflection regarding their own culture, learn about the cultural diversity of their students, and reflect on how cultural differences may impact staff and student interactions (Vincent et al., 2011). Furthermore, Vincent et al. (2011) recommend that staff work with school stakeholders that represent the diversity of the school to define and describe expected and problem behaviors in order to prevent cross-cultural misunderstandings. A social justice perspective would add that the goal would be to prevent valuing or giving power to one cultural perspective over another (see North, 2006; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

Another way to manage the social justice dilemma regarding how the definition and teaching of expectations maintains power structures that place a priority on one group's values over another is to view SWPBS simply as a method to externally manage student behavior. Some could argue that a goal of compliance with school expectations threatens social justice by disempowering students and disrespecting their own cultural values regarding behavioral expectations. However, some could also argue schools also need to effectively and efficiently manage student behavior in order to create a safe learning environment for everyone in which there is time to teach and learn. The tension present between these two arguments aligns the tension between redistribution and recognition described by North (2006).

These tensions can be balanced by implementing culturally responsive SWPBS and teaching students the skills they need in order to reason through their behavior and eventually choose behavior that respects the needs and rights of others. In order to do this, the school might consider implementing culturally responsive SWPBS with social-

emotional learning curricula (see Vincent et al., 2001 for recommendations on how to implement culturally responsive SWPBS; see Bear, 2010 for how to balance SWPBS and SEL). Doing so may support the school in achieving social justice in and from schools, where students experience a positive learning environment and develop the skills necessary to consider and support the rights and welfare of others (Griffiths, 1998). In other words, explicitly supporting social-emotional learning could support students in engaging in prosocial moral reasoning beyond the school setting (Bear et al., 2003).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

#### **Data**

One of the benefits of the present study is that it captured how a school implemented and sustained SWPBS without the support of researchers and how sustained implementation related to signs of student well-being. However, when working with a school to complete a retroactive case study of such an effort, the researcher must rely on the memories of individuals interviewed. It is possible that SWPBS was not implemented exactly in the way participants' described or that participants failed to mention features of implementation or other interventions in place that could have related to student outcomes simply because they forgot about them, did not think to mention them, or were not present at the time they were developed and/or implemented.

In addition, a case study of this nature is restricted to the longitudinal, quantitative data available. First, the present study would have been able to draw stronger conclusions regarding the impact of SWPBS if academic, behavior, and attendance data were available prior to SWPBS implementation. Second, the present study would have been

able to draw stronger conclusions regarding the relationship between SWPBS and academic achievement and problem behavior if academic and ODR data could have been linked by a common identifier. If the data could be linked, it would be possible to examine if reductions in problem behavior truly related to improved academic achievement. Moreover, attendance data was not available by student with a common identifier to link the attendance data to discipline and academic data. Linking these three data sources would provide insight into the relationship between problem behavior, academic achievement, and engagement in school. However, the school is now able to link these data, and thus moving forward it would be valuable for the school to examine if student achievement and attendance does indeed improve as problem behavior decreases.

In addition, the study would have been able to draw stronger conclusions about the achievement of social justice through equitable outcomes if demographic data could be linked to academic and discipline data. With this data linked, it would be possible to more closely examine the relationship between a closing achievement gap and ODRs. Vincent and Tobin (2011) found that SWPBS does not relate to reductions in disproportional representation of students identified as Hispanic and economically disadvantaged in discipline, highlighting the importance culturally responsive SWPBS (Vincent et al., 2011). It would be interesting to examine whether or not disproportional representation of these subgroups in discipline was and is a concern at the school and to connect this data with academic achievement data. Now that the school has adopted a common identifier across databases and SWIS<sup>TM</sup> (ECS, © 2010), it would be interesting



to further examine differences between subgroups across academic and discipline outcomes.

### **School Research**

Like many schools, the school in the present study likely had many systemic and targeted interventions in place prior to and during SWPBS implementation. For example, through informal conversations with the school, it was clear that they were also implementing RtI in order to address the academic achievement of all students. The school may have been engaging in other efforts to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students that could have related to the outcomes observed. While the case study allowed for the examination of a more authentic case, a case in which a school engaged in SWPBS implementation without researcher involvement, the examination was necessarily messy. Schools, such as this one, rarely implement one change at a time.

### **Focus Groups**

Conducting focus groups within a school setting can be challenging because teachers are busy people. Interviews were easily scheduled because the research only needed coordinate times with one person at a time. The green team focus group occurred during the green team meeting, as the green team was invested in giving up their meeting time to support the research. However, teachers were reluctant to give up their teaching team time or planning time to participate in the focus group. In order to accommodate teachers, three focus groups were conducted, two of which only included three participants. Krueger (1995) recommends six to eight participants per focus group. The

majority of teacher participants were eighth grade teachers, skewing teacher data to those who work mostly with eighth grade students.

Student focus groups were also challenging to arrange and conduct as they could not take place before or after school and parents rightfully want their students to be in class. An effort was made to conduct the focus groups during students' non-academic periods, but it could not be guaranteed that the focus groups would not run in to an academic period. Thus, the seventh grade focus group only included three participants. There were five eighth grade participants, perhaps because eighth grade parents have more of a relationship with the school and thus were more confident in agreeing to participation. However, the eighth grade focus group could not be recorded because one parent did not consent to audio-recording. Therefore, data and quotes reflect the most accurate depiction the facilitator was able to capture via notes. Finally, student participants seemed shy about participating and tended to agree with one another. Looking back, individual student interviews may have better supported students in expressing their opinions, as middle school students may be worried about expressing diverging thoughts and opinions amongst peers.

### **Moving Forward**

One goal of the study was to conduct research that was of value and meaning to the participants. The study achieved this goal in that the school is using the data from this research to inform future development of the acknowledgement system and interventions for bullying. Thus, the study helped bridge the research to practice gap by conducting research that influenced the revision and development of practices in school

(see Kazdin, 2008 for a discussion on the research to practice gap). However, it would be interesting to continue working with the school in further developing and evaluating SWPBS. Given the time-limited nature of the present study, such process research (see Cappella, Reinke, & Hoagwood, 2011) was not possible. However, future studies could investigate the process and outcome of SWPBS implementation by partnering with schools throughout the process of evaluation, adaptation, and reevaluation. This kind of process research can bridge the gap between research and practice, build an understanding of how to support the ongoing evolution and thus sustainment of effective interventions in schools, support an understanding of how to apply evidence-based interventions to unique school contexts, and provide further evidence as to outcomes of such efforts (Cappella et al., 2011).

Another goal of the study was to examine multiple signs of well-being at multiple sites. However, the list of signs of well-being at multiple sites could be exhaustive. The researcher chose to focus on variables identified by the literature as potentially related to SWPBS and variables for which the partnering school had existing data. Signs of well-being the study examined could use further investigation as to their relationship to SWPB, including relationships, prosocial behavior, engagement in school, and climate. Future studies might consider examining the relationship between SWPBS implementation and these variables over time by measuring these signs through surveys and observations. With regard to relationships and climate, students and school professionals could rate the quality of the relationships and school climate. With regard to prosocial behavior, researchers could observe prosocial behavior and teachers could

rate prosocial behavior. With regard to engagement, students could respond to surveys, researchers could conduct observations, and individual student attendance data could be examined.

Given participants' concerns regarding students' internalization of the values communicated through SWPBS and the prevalence of bullying, future research could examine the relationship between implementation, social-moral reasoning, and bullying over time. In order for SWPBS to relate to social justice from schools, where students learn to respect the needs and rights of others in the absence of adult supervision or the threat of punishment, students would need to learn how to reason through their behavior in order to arrive at prosocial behavioral choices and be internally motivated to engage in such reasoning. If SWPBS is not sufficient in making this happen, other proactive interventions, such as the implementation of social-emotional learning curricula (SEL), may be necessary. Indeed, Bear (2010) recommends balancing the management of behavior through SWPBS with teaching self-discipline through an SEL approach and outlines how this could be done.

Of particular interest to the researcher is the relationship between SWPBS alone, SEL alone, and SWPBS plus SEL and social-moral reasoning, bullying, and signs of well-being. Bullying could be assessed by simple surveys, such as the one the school developed. Observations may not be ideal as bullying often occurs outside of adults' line of sight. Social-moral reasoning could be assessed by asking children about their thoughts, feelings, and potential behaviors in response to a variety of scenarios. Well-being could be assessed by examining students' relationships, school climate, and

engagement in school. Such research would provide evidence for the authors' assertion that SEL may need to be added to SWPBS implementation in order to student behavior to change outside of the supervision of adults at school.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

### **Administrator and Green Team Leader Interview Protocol**

*The interview will begin by going over the informed consent form. The interviewer will remind the interviewee not to mention the name of the school, district, or the names of other school members.*

1. Do you consent to audio-recording?
2. I want to start off by collecting some background information. Please describe how long you have worked for the school and how many years of experience you have in SWPBS.
3. What training have you had related to SPWBS?
4. What training have others in the school had?
5. Next, I would like to get an understanding of your general perception of SWPBS.  
How would you define and describe it? What do you think are its central components? What is its' goal? How do you think it impacts the school and its stakeholders (e.g., teachers, staff, students, etc.)
6. *(If they were present when it was first developed and implemented)* Next, I would like to get a sense of how SPWBS began.
  - a. What prompted the school to consider implementing SWPBS?
  - b. What was the planning process like?
    - i. Who was involved in planning?
  - c. How was it introduced to students, staff, and parents? How was it “rolled out”?

7. (*If they were present when implementation fidelity was reached*) Now I would like to get a sense of how implementation fidelity was reached.

- a. What would you describe as barriers and facilitators to SWPBS implementation reaching fidelity?
- b. Did systems and practices need to be developed and/or refined in order for implementation fidelity to be reached?
  - i. If so, what systems and practices needed development and refinement after the initial roll-out of SWPBS?
    - 1. What data was used to determine this?
    - 2. How were systems and practices developed and refined?

8. Next, I would like to get a sense of how SWPBS was sustained and refined.

- a. What would you describe as barriers and facilitators to SWPBS implementation being sustained?
- b. Were additional systems and/or practices were developed and introduced?
  - i. If so, why were they developed and how were they introduced?
  - ii. Have they addressed the issues that prompted their development?
    - 1. What data is used to determine this?
  - iii. Are they still in place?

9. Now I would like to get a sense of your perception of various student outcomes.

- a. Do you think SWPBS relates to student outcomes? If so, what ones and how?
  - i. For example, do you think SWPBS relates to:
    - 1. Student engagement in school?



2. Improved academics?
  3. Positive relationships between
    - a. Teachers and students?
    - b. Students?
    - c. The school and the community?
    - d. Amongst school professionals?
  4. Increased safety?
    - a. Reductions in victimization (e.g., bullying)?
  5. Reductions in problem behavior?
  6. Students –
    - a. Behaving appropriately?
    - b. Assuming responsibility for their behavior?
    - c. Engaging in self-discipline?
    - d. Acting out of concern for the welfare of others?
    - e. Working together cooperatively?
    - f. Helping out one another?
10. That concludes the interview. Thank you so much for your time and for your participation in this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

## **Green Team, Teacher, and Staff Member Focus Group Protocol**

### **Opening**

*Once all participants have arrived, the moderator will review the consent form with them and ask them to sign if they consent to participant and sign if they consent to audio-recording. Participants who don't consent to participation will be dismissed.*

*Facilitator passes out name cards with participant numbers.*

Moderator says: The facilitator is now passing out name cards with numbers on them.

These are your participant numbers. Before each time you talk, please say your number.

This will allow me to know who said what while protecting your identities. Please refer to others by number for the same reason. Also, please do not mention the name of the school, district, or the name of other school members so as to protect the school's and the school members' confidentiality.

*Facilitator passes out demographic forms.*

Moderator says: Please fill out this form. You do not have to if you do not wish to provide this information. This information will be linked to your participant number, but not you personally.

*Once demographic forms are completed and handed in, the Moderator says: We are now ready to begin. In order to respect everyone's right to confidentiality, I ask that you not discuss what we are about to discuss outside of this room.*

### **Questions**

Start with question three of the administrator and green team leader protocol.

1. That concludes the focus group. Thank you so much for your time and for your participation in this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

## Student Focus Group Protocol

### Opening Script

Hello, I am Alissa Briggs, and this is \_\_\_\_\_ from Loyola University Chicago. I have you here today because I want to learn about how students are doing at this school and what this school does to help its students. Please feel free to say whatever you think. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am going to ask. Because you are going to be sharing your opinions, I ask that everyone please be respectful of what others have to say. What do you think I mean by being respectful of what others have to say?

[*discuss*]

Please feel free to share what you think. No one will know what you said, as long as you respect confidentiality. What do I mean by confidentiality? [*discuss*] Please do not talk about what you or others say outside of this room. Can everyone please tell me if they promise to keep what we say here today in the room?

In order to protect your identity, you all have name cards in front of you with a number on it. *Facilitator passes out number cards.* Please refer to yourself by your number each time you talk, and refer to others by their numbers. This way I know who said what, and I can share what was said, without sharing your name. Also, please do not say the name of the school, district, or other members of the school, like teachers and students. It is important to respect everyone's confidentiality, including those not in the room.

I would like to audio-record this, because I don't think I will be able to keep all the wonderful things you have to share in my head. I will not share the recording with

anyone. If you don't feel comfortable with being recorded, that is fine; I will just have \_\_\_\_\_ take notes. Are you ok with being recorded?

To summarize, I am going to ask you questions about how students are doing and what this school does to help students. For example, your school has the following expectations (*insert expectations here*) and rewards you for following those expectations by (*insert acknowledgement practices here*). Your school teaches expectations by (*insert teaching practices here*). I am curious if you like things like this that your school does and if you think these kinds of things help students do the right thing and stay out of trouble.

Your participation and what you say will be kept confidential, meaning that no one will be able to link what you say to you as an individual. I need your help in this. I need you to make sure you do not talk about what we say outside of this room. If you do not want to participate any more for any reason, you may leave and I will write you a pass to go back to class.

We are now going to get started. The first thing I am going to ask you to do is to indicate your race/ethnicity. *Show form and where they will indicate it.* On form are common race/ethnicity categories. Not all categories are listed, only common ones. If you identify as something else, write that on the line at the end of the list. If do not know your race ethnicity, that is fine, simply circle don't know. If you don't want to write anything, that is fine too. *Pass out sheets. Each student will have their own sheet and data will be compiled later.*

*When they are done with the demographic forms, say:* Now we are going to get started with questions. Again, I am curious as to how you think students are doing at this school – if you think the school is helping students get along with each other, with their teachers, and do well in classes – and if and how the school is helping students do well. Please make sure to say your participant number before you begin talking.

### **Questions**

1. What do you think about the expectations at this school and the rewards students get for following them?
  - a. Do you like them?
  - b. Do you think they could be better?
  - c. Do you think your school would be different without them? If so, how?
2. Do students have problems with behavior at this school Please explain.
  - a. Do students often break rules?
  - b. Do students often get in trouble?
  - c. Does student misbehavior take up a lot of teachers' time?
  - d. Are students able to control their behavior?
  - e. What do the adults in the school do when a student gets in trouble? What are the consequences? Do the consequences work to stop the bad behavior?
3. Do you feel that there are any problems with fighting at this school? Why or why not? Please explain.
4. Do you feel that there are any problems with students picking on each other at this school? Why or why not? Please explain.

5. Do students take responsibility for their actions? Please explain.
6. Do you think students at this school do the right thing, like help out other kids if they are having a hard time, being picked on, or being left out? Why or why not?
7. Do you feel that the school is safe? Do you think students feel safe at school? Why or why not? Please explain.
8. Do you feel that students like going to school? Why or why not? Please explain.
9. Do you think most students in this school are doing well in classes? Are most students getting good grades?
  - a. Do students participate in class? How so?
  - b. Do students try hard in class? How so?
  - c. What do the adults in the school do in order to help students learn? Is there anything they could do better?
10. What are the relationships like between:
  - a. Students?
  - b. Students and teachers?
11. That concludes the focus group. Thank you so much for your time and for your participation in this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

APPENDIX B  
BULLY SURVEY



### Bully Survey 2009

**Has this happened to you?** Check only ONE box for each item.

During the past month:	Never	Less than 1 time per week	1 time per week	2-4 times per week	5 times or more per week
I was hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids					
Other kids said mean things, teased me, or called me names					
Other kids told stories about me that were not true					
Other kids did not let me join in what they were doing					
Other kids took things that belong to me					
Other kids threatened to hurt me or take my things					

If any of these happened to you (**check all that apply**): **What did you do?**

I got help from an adult at school		I got help from my parents	
I got help from another kid		I ignored it or walked away	
I hit, kicked, or pushed the kid		I said mean things, teased, or called the kid names	
I told the kid to stop		I tried to stop the kid by saying or doing something funny	
I told the kid I agreed with what he or she said about me		I said things to myself to help myself feel better	
I avoided the kid so I would not get hurt or teased again		I did nothing	

**Who was it done by?**

Girl		Boy		Group	
------	--	-----	--	-------	--

**Where did it happen?**

Classroom	
Cafeteria	
Hallways/lunchroom	
Going to and from school	

Bathroom/locker room	
Before or after school activity	

**Who did you tell?**

No one	
A friend	
An adult at school	
A parent	
Bus driver	
Other	

**Have you seen this happen?**

For the following, check only ONE box for each item. (check the box ONLY if the item happened to someone else (not you)).

During the past month	Never	Less than 1 time per week	1 time per week	2-4 times per week	5 or more times per week
I saw someone get hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids					
I heard kids say mean things, tease, or call someone names					
I heard kids tell stories about someone that were not true					
I saw kids not let someone join in what they were doing					
I saw or heard that kids took things that belong to someone else					
I heard kids threaten to hurt someone or take things					

If you heard or saw any of these things happen (check ALL that apply): **What did you do?**

I did nothing		I got help from an adult at school	
I asked the kid who was left out to join my group		I stood up to the kid who was bullying the other kid	
I helped the kid who was left out to get away		I talked to the kid who was left out about how he/she felt	
I helped the kid come up with ideas about how to handle the problem			

**Who was it done by?**

Girl		Boy		Group	
------	--	-----	--	-------	--

**Where did it happen?**

Classroom	
Cafeteria	
Hallways/lunchroom	
Going to and from school	
Bathroom/locker room	
Before or after school activity	

**Who did you tell?**

No one	
A friend	
An adult at school	
A parent	
Bus driver	
Other	

**How safe do you feel?** During the past month, this is how safe I felt in each of these places (check only ONE box for each):

	Very unsafe & scared	Unsafe & scared	Kind of unsafe	Kind of safe	Safe	Very safe
In my classroom						
In the cafeteria						
In the hallways						
Going to and from school						
In the bathroom/locker room						
At before or after school activities						

**What is your school like?** Check the ONE box that best describes your school:

	Never/hardly ever true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always/always true
The other kids help if they see someone being bullied or picked on				
Kids tell adults at school when				

other kids are being bullied or being picked on				
If someone is alone at lunch, others will invite him/her to join in				
Kids at this school encourage other kids to do the best they can at their schoolwork				
There are clear rules at our school				
The teachers and staff help if they see someone being bullied or picked on				
Kids who misbehave take a lot of my teacher's time				
Adults at this school care that the students do the best schoolwork they can				
My school tries to make everyone feel included				
When I'm upset, other kids try to comfort me or cheer me up				
I like going to school				
I am afraid to go to school				
Most people at this school are kind				

### **Bully Survey 2010**

1. I feel safe at the school (yes or no).
2. I have been bullied at the school (yes or no).
3. I have witnessed bullying at the school (yes or no).

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC FORMS

**Green Team and Teacher/Staff Members Focus Groups****Demographic Form**

The purpose of this form is to give me some information to help me determine if responses differ depending on how long people have worked at the school and their role.

Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you worked for the school?

- A. 0 – 5 years
- B. 5 – 10 years
- C. More than 10 years

What is your role (e.g., teacher, staff member): \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Focus Groups Demographic Form**

Please circle your race/ethnicity or write your race/ethnicity on the blank line if you don't see it on the list. The purpose of this form is to get an idea of how well the group represents the racial and ethnic makeup of the school. You don't have to indicate your race/ethnicity if you don't want to. If you don't know your race/ethnicity, that is fine, just circle "don't know."

1. What is your race/ethnicity?

- a. Black, non-Hispanic
- b. White, non-Hispanic
- c. Hispanic
- d. Asian/Pacific Islander
- e. American Indian/Alaskan Native
- f. Don't know
- g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
RECRUITMENT EMAILS



### **Administrator and Team Leader Recruitment Email**

Dear (*insert Name*),

The purpose of this email is to briefly introduce myself, Alissa Briggs, the work I am doing to with Carl Sandburg, and to request your participation in this work. As you may or may not know, for my dissertation research (under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago), I am examining how Carl Sandburg developed, implemented, and sustained positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and how PBIS relates to students' well-being. I think Carl Sandburg is a positive example of PBIS implementation, and I am hoping to help other schools learn from Carl Sandburg by communicating its example through research. Moreover, I am hoping to help Carl Sandburg dig deep into its data and to thoroughly examine its systems and practices so that the school can continue to improve.

I am requesting your participation in this research because you have valuable insight as to how positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) was developed, implemented, and sustained given your position of leadership in the process. In addition, you have valuable insight as to how it impacts students' well-being. Specifically, I am requesting your participation in an interview on these topics. I will be interviewing you and will have an assistant with me to take notes. The interview will take place in a private location at the school at a time and place of your choice. Please note that the place needs to be private for confidentiality purposes.

For more information regarding the study, please see the attached consent form, which you will be asked to sign at the start of the focus group should you desire to participate.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

If you wish to participate, please contact Alissa Briggs directly at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu).

Thank you,  
Alissa Briggs

### Team Recruitment Email

Dear Green Team Member,

The purpose of this email is to briefly introduce myself, Alissa Briggs, the work I am doing to with Carl Sandburg, and to request your participation in this work. As you may or may not know, for my dissertation research (under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago), I am examining how Carl Sandburg developed, implemented, and sustained positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and how PBIS relates to students' well-being. I think Carl Sandburg is a positive example of PBIS implementation, and I am hoping to help other schools learn from Carl Sandburg by communicating its example through research. Moreover, I am hoping to help Carl Sandburg dig deep into its data and to thoroughly examine its systems and practices so that the school can continue to improve.

I am requesting your participation in this research because you have valuable insight as to how positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) was developed, implemented, and sustained given your position of leadership in the process. In addition, you have valuable insight as to how it impacts students' well-being. Specifically, I am requesting your participation in a focus group on this topic. The focus group will be led by Alissa Briggs and an assistant in *(insert place)* at *(insert time)*.

For detailed information regarding the focus group procedures, please see the attached consent form, which you will be asked to sign at the start of the focus group.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

If you wish to participate, please contact Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu). Please note that you are a green team member in your email.

Thank you,  
Alissa

### **Certified and Non-Certified Staff Recruitment Email**

Greetings,

The purpose of this email is to briefly introduce myself, Alissa Briggs, the work I am doing to with Carl Sandburg, and to request your participation in this work. As you may or may not know, for my dissertation research (under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago), I am examining how Carl Sandburg developed, implemented, and sustained positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and how PBIS relates to students' well-being. I think Carl Sandburg is a positive example of PBIS implementation, and I am hoping to help other schools learn from Carl Sandburg by communicating its example through research. Moreover, I am hoping to help Carl Sandburg dig deep into its data and to thoroughly examine its systems and practices so that the school can continue to improve.

I am requesting your participation in this research because you have valuable insight as to how positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is implemented and its relationship to student well-being. Specifically, I am requesting your participation in a focus group on this topic. The focus group will be led by Alissa Briggs and an assistant in *(insert place)* at *(insert time)*.

For detailed information regarding the focus group procedures, please see the attached consent form, which you will be asked to sign at the start of the focus group.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

If you wish to participate, please contact Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu). Please note if you are a green team member.

Thank you,  
Alissa Briggs

APPENDIX E  
CONSENT FORMS

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**  
**(Administrator and Green Team Leader)**

**Project Title:** A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and its Impact on Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective

**Researcher(s):** Alissa Briggs

**Faculty Sponsor:** David Shriberg, Ph.D.

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Alissa Briggs for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you have a unique perspective of the development, implementation, and sustainment of positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) given your involvement as a leader in this process. You also have a unique perspective as to how PBIS implementation impacts students given your knowledge of data on student outcomes and involvement with students as an administrator or leader and teacher in the school.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine how a school's efforts to prevent problem behavior is implemented, sustained, and impacts students.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview where you will be asked questions regarding how PBIS was developed, implemented, sustained, and refined. You will also be asked to share your opinions regarding students' well-being – how students are doing socially, behaviorally, and academically – and how PBIS relates to their well-being. The interview will be conducted by the researcher with another graduate student serving as an assistant.
- Be audio-recorded. Unless you do not consent to audio-recording, focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Notes will also be taken.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

A direct benefit from your participation is that the data will likely be used to make further improvements to PBIS at your school. An indirect benefit from your participation is that the data will add to a gap in the research as to how PBIS is sustained over time and how it impacts student well-being.

**Confidentiality:**

- What you say during the interview will not be shared with others in the school.
- In order to protect the identity of others in the school and of the school itself, you will be asked not to say the name of others and of the school or district. If you do, the name will not be included in the transcript or the notes.
- Given that you are an administrator/green team leader, if your school is identified you will likely be identified. The name of your school and district will not be shared nor included in the transcript or notes.
- The audio-recording, transcript, and notes will be stored in a secure place to which only the researcher has access and will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Sign here if you consent to participation and audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, including audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Sign here only if you consent to participation but not to audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, excluding audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study, but do not consent to being audio-recorded. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

---

**Participant's Signature**

---

**Date**

---

**Researcher's Signature**

---

**Date**

## **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Team)**

**Project Title:** A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and its Impact on Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective

**Researcher(s):** Alissa Briggs

**Faculty Sponsor:** David Shriberg, Ph.D.

### **Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Alissa Briggs for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you have a unique perspective on the development, implementation, and sustainment of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) given your involvement on the team charged with its implementation and evaluation at the universal level. You also have a unique perspective on how PBIS implementation impacts students given your level of knowledge of schoolwide data as a member of a team that reviews such data and your involvement with students as a faculty/staff member.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine how a school's efforts to prevent problem behavior is implemented, sustained, and impacts students.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a group discussion (focus group) with other green team members regarding how PBIS was developed, implemented, sustained, and refined. You will also be asked to share your opinions regarding students' well-being – how students are doing socially, behaviorally, and academically – and how PBIS relates to their well-being. The focus group will be led by the researcher and another graduate student serving as an assistant.
- Fill out a brief demographic form at the beginning of the focus group.
- Be audio-recorded. Unless a participant does not consent to audio-recording, focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Notes will also be taken.

### **Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.



A direct benefit from your participation is that the data will likely be used to make further improvements to PBIS at your school. An indirect benefit from your participation is that the data will add to a gap in the research as to how PBIS is sustained over time and how it impacts student well-being.

**Confidentiality:**

- You and other focus group participants will be assigned a participant number. You will be asked to refer to yourself and others by this number so as to protect your identities. You will also be asked to not mention names of other individuals or of the school or school district during the focus group. Any names that are mentioned will not be included in the transcript or notes.
- You and other focus group participants will also be asked not to discuss what others said outside of the focus group. There are limits to confidentiality in the sense that it cannot be guaranteed that other participants will not discuss what was said outside of the focus group.
- The audio-recording, transcript, and notes will be stored in a secure place to which only the researcher has access and will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Sign here if you consent to participation and audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, including audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Sign here only if you consent to participation but not to audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, excluding audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study, but do not consent to being audio-recorded. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

---

**Participant's Signature**

---

**Date**

---

**Researcher's Signature**

---

**Date**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**  
**(Teacher/Staff Member)**

**Project Title:** A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and its Impact on Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective

**Researcher(s):** Alissa Briggs

**Faculty Sponsor:** David Shriberg, Ph.D.

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Alissa Briggs for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you have a unique perspective on positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) given your involvement in the school's efforts as a teacher or staff member. You also have a unique perspective as to how PBIS implementation impacts students given your involvement with students as a teacher or staff member.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine how a school's efforts to prevent problem behavior is implemented, sustained, and impacts students.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a group discussion (focus group) with up to eight other teachers and staff members regarding your experiences with PBIS. You will also be asked to share your opinions regarding students' well-being – how students are doing socially, behaviorally, and academically – and how PBIS relates to their well-being. The focus group will be led by the researcher with another graduate student serving as an assistant.
- Fill out a brief demographic form at the beginning of the focus group.
- Be audio-recorded. Unless a participant does not consent to audio-recording, focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Notes will also be taken.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

A direct benefit from your participation is that the data will likely be used to make further improvements to PBIS at your school. An indirect benefit from your participation is that the data will add to a gap in the research as to how PBIS is sustained over time and how it impacts student well-being.

**Confidentiality:**

- You and other focus group participants will be assigned a participant number. You will be asked to refer to yourself and others by this number so as to protect your identities. You will also be asked to not mention names of other individuals or the school or school district during the focus group. Any names that are mentioned will be deleted from the transcript and will not be included in the notes.
- You and other focus group participants will also be asked not to discuss what others said outside of the focus group. There are limits to confidentiality in the sense that it cannot be guaranteed that other participants will not discuss what was said outside of the focus group.
- The audio-recording, transcript, and notes will be stored in a secure place to which only the researcher has access and will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Sign here if you consent to participation and audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, including audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Sign here only if you consent to participation but not to audio recording.**

**Statement of Consent, excluding audio-recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study, but do not consent to being audio-recorded. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

---

**Participant's Signature**

---

**Date**

---

**Researcher's Signature**

---

**Date**

**Parent or Guardian Cover Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

To get a better sense of how students at Carl Sandburg Junior High School feel about how student behavior is handled, I am doing a research project about how positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is working. Through PBIS, systems are in place to teach and celebrate the achievement of Carl Sandburg's core values, the "Wildcat Ways" (Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible), and also to correct student misbehavior. My work at Carl Sandburg is being supervised by Dr. David Shriberg, a professor in the school psychology program at Loyola University Chicago. All of my work at Carl Sandburg, including any work with students, will go through the principal and school psychologist.

In order to get complete information about how PBIS is working at Carl Sandburg, the input of students is very important because they are the ones most affected by what the school does. To hear from the students about PBIS, I am asking for your consent to talk with your son/daughter in a small group so that I can hear from them about how PBIS is working for them. Your child is one of 20 students was randomly selected for participation out of all of the students in his or her grade.

In this envelope you will find a consent form that explains the study and asks for your permission for your child's participation. You will also find an addressed, stamped envelope. Please use this envelope to return the consent form to me.

Thank you,

Alissa Briggs

## **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Parental Consent)**

**Project Title:** A Case Study Evaluation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and its Impact on Student Well-Being from a Social Justice Perspective

**Researcher:** Alissa Briggs

**Faculty Sponsor:** David Shriberg, Ph.D.

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study being conducted by Alissa Briggs for a dissertation under the supervision of David Shriberg in the Department of School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago. The purpose of this study is to understand how PBIS is carried out in a school and how it impacts students. Your child is being asked to be part of the project so that we can get information about how PBIS is working from the students themselves. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to allow your child to participate in the study.

### **Procedures**

If you agree to allow your child to be in the study, he or she will be asked to:

- Participate in a group discussion (focus group) with approximately eight students in his or her grade. The group will be led by the researcher and an assistant. The focus group will take place in a private location in the school during the school day at a time approved by the principal. The group discussion should last no more than an hour, and will have a two hour time limit.
- Describe how he or she and other students are doing socially, behaviorally, and academically.
- Indicate his or her race/ethnicity. This data will not be linked to his or her name or participant number.
- Be audio-recorded. A written transcript will be developed from the audio-recording. However, you and other parents have the option to consent for your child to participate in the project, but not be audio-recorded. Your child will also have the option to say they don't want to be audio-recorded. If you, any other parent, your child, or any other child does not agree to audio-recording, then the focus group will not be recorded.
- Be given the option to agree to participate before the focus group begins. Any child that does not want to participate does not have to or can stop participating at any time with no negative consequences.

### **Risks**

One risk to participating in this study is that your child may miss a class. However, the focus group will take place at a time approved by the principal and an effort will be made to schedule the focus group during an hour where your child is not scheduled to be in a

core academic class. Other than that, there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

### **Benefits**

A direct benefit to your child is that the school will likely use the data to make further improvements to PBIS in order to better support students. An indirect benefit is that your child's participation could inform practices in addressing behavior for future students. Another indirect benefit is that your child's participation will provide important information to others implementing PBIS because students' viewpoints are missing from the research on PBIS.

### **Confidentiality**

- The audio file and transcript will be kept in a secure location to which only the researcher has access. They will be destroyed five years after the conclusion of the study.
- Students will be asked to not share what was discussed or who participated in order to protect participants' confidentiality. However, a limit to this is that, while we will stress the importance of participants not sharing information outside of the group, we cannot guarantee that this will be the case.
- Students will be assigned a participant number and will be instructed to refer to themselves and others by the number. In addition, they will be asked not to mention the names of other individuals who are part of the school community. They will also be asked not to say the name of the school or school district. If names are mentioned on accident, they will not be recorded in the transcript or notes. .

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation is voluntary. If you do not want your child to be in this study, he or she does not have to participate. Even if you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she is free not to answer any question, to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty, and to refuse audio-recording. Your decision or your child's decision regarding participation will have no effect on your relationship with the school.

### **Contacts and Questions**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Alissa Briggs at [abriggs@luc.edu](mailto:abriggs@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor Dr. David Shriberg at [dshribe@luc.edu](mailto:dshribe@luc.edu).

If you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

### **Directions for Providing Consent**

If you consent to your child's participation, please sign on the next page and indicate your child's year in school so that they can be assigned to the group for their grade. There are two possible places to sign. You only need to sign in one place. One place is for



agreement to participation and audio-recording. The other place is for agreement to participation only, no audio-recording. Then, please return the form using the stamped, addressed envelope included with this letter.

**Sign here if you consent to participation and audio-recording:**

**Statement of Consent to Participation and Audio-Recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to allow your child to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Your child's year in school (please circle one):      7<sup>th</sup> grade                      8<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent's/Guardian's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Only sign here if you consent to participation to but not to audio-recording:**

**Statement of Consent to Participation Only, No Audio-Recording:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, but do not consent to your child being audio-recorded. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Your child's year in school (please circle one):      7<sup>th</sup> grade                      8<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent's/Guardian's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

APPENDIX F

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS STEPS

### **Developing the Codebook**

1. The researcher read transcripts to understand the data in general.
2. The researcher read through the transcripts again and took notes on topics discussed.
  - a. Themes and subthemes emerged.
3. The researcher checked to ensure at least three participants discussed the themes and subthemes
4. The researcher created a codebook that defined each theme and by the topics participants discussed relating to those themes and subthemes

### **Coding**

5. The researcher used the codebook to code the transcripts, revising definitions for codes as necessary.
6. A volunteer coder with experience in qualitative data analysis was enlisted to support the reliability of the coding process.
  - a. The researcher trained the coder in the codebook by coding part of a student transcript, a teacher transcript, and green team leader transcript with the coder.
7. The researcher and the volunteer coded separately and came together to discuss discrepancies in coding.
8. The codebook was revised based on the discussion of discrepancies
9. The researcher and volunteer coder coded the majority of transcripts separately again and came together to discuss discrepancies.
10. A second volunteer coder was enlisted and trained.

11. The researcher and volunteer coder coded the rest of the transcripts separately and came together to discuss discrepancies.

### **Audit**

12. An auditor with experience in qualitative researcher reviewed the codebook and the consensus version of the coding.
13. The researcher reviewed auditor comments and accepted most recommended changes to coding.

### **Abstraction**

14. After the transcripts were coded, the researcher read through statements coded under each theme for each participant group and summarized these statements into abstracts by participant group.

### **Audit**

15. The auditor reviewed the statements and abstracts, evaluating whether or not the abstracts represented the data.

### **Cross-Analysis**

16. The researcher reviewed the abstracts and examined how themes related to one another and developed categories to describe their relationship.

APPENDIX G  
CODEBOOK

### **Categorization Instructions**

- There are 13 themes. There are subthemes for some themes. Each theme is defined by topics discussed by participants. If the topic is present in the statement of a participant, then the theme or subtheme applies.
- Code each statement as a whole. Each statement has its own row in an excel spreadsheet. Indicate the presence of a theme or subtheme by marking the cell corresponding to the code number and statement with your assigned number.
- More than one theme can apply to a statement.
- I am not coding data related to secondary (yellow) or tertiary (red) teams or efforts.  
*When I have found statements relating to secondary or tertiary efforts, I have italicized them.*
- Use the “notes” column to indicate any questions about how to code a statement.

## Codebook

#	Theme	Subtheme	Topics
1	Systems, Policies, & Practices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing or additional programs/initiatives</li> <li>• School-wide systems, policies, procedures (e.g., time provided to get to class), and practices               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stated goals of these policies and procedures (e.g., addressing social-emotional needs) (<i>must mention goal in connection with system/policy/procedure/or practice, don't code if they just say "we want to address social-emotional needs at [school]"</i>)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why systems, policies, and practices are adopted (e.g., in order to address a problem, <i>not related to buy-in</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ When practices are done</li> <li>○ Re-developing systems, policies, and practices</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How systems, policies, &amp; practices are developed, implemented, and introduced to staff and students and               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who is involved in this</li> <li>○ The time it takes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Structure supporting the management of decisions and implementation of practices on a school-wide basis, including release time.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Taking time out of instruction to implement practices</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other practices of staff (such as point sheets – <i>do not code as acknowledgment because it is separate from SWPBS</i>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>This can include descriptions of members of the school acting in opposition to the system by making up their own practices.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

1a		Teaching & Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations (e.g., the expectations of the school for behavior)</li> <li>• Teaching and re-teaching expectations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cool tools, kick offs</li> <li>○ Who teaches cool tools</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teaching and re-teaching procedures and policies to students and staff</li> <li>• Student training in teaching cool tools</li> </ul>
1b		Acknowledgment & Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgements (e.g., rewarding others, rewards – tangible and verbal, “gotchas”, celebrations)</li> <li>• Consequences (e.g., referrals, lunch detentions, alternative school – CLA, going to the conference room to talk to the principal)</li> <li>• Getting caught/getting in trouble</li> <li>• Delivering consequences or rewards</li> <li>• Students redeeming or not redeeming gotchas</li> </ul>
2	Universal Team (Green Team)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is on the team</li> <li>• How the team is structured in terms of roles assigned to team members</li> <li>• Roles and experience of team members outside of the team</li> <li>• Responsibilities of the team</li> <li>• Activities of the team</li> <li>• Team Functioning (e.g., consistent meeting time, completion of tasks)</li> </ul>
3	Leadership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District support of PBS</li> <li>• Administrative involvement in and support of PBS</li> <li>• References to team leaders</li> </ul>
4	Data		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior data: SWIS (referral) data (also referred to as ODRs), tardy data</li> <li>• Academic data: ISAT test scores, MAP scores</li> <li>• Gathering and interpreting data, inclusive of feedback</li> <li>• Tracking progress</li> <li>• Developing and using instruments in order to gather feedback</li> <li>• Instruments used to gather information</li> <li>• Plus/Delta</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting data-based goals</li> <li>• Using data to make decisions</li> </ul>
5	Communication		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minutes being disseminated</li> <li>○ Faculty meetings &amp; inservices</li> <li>○ Team members serving as liaison between green team and teaching teams</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Feedback               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gathering feedback (<i>if using an instrument for this, the data category also applies</i>)</li> <li>○ Providing feedback to staff (e.g., regarding outcomes of a referral)</li> <li>○ Sharing data (<i>the data category also applies</i>)</li> <li>○ Letting staff and students know about the goals and progress towards goals (<i>if letting staff know about the progress of goals the data category also applies</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General communication               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students talking to teachers (e.g., telling them if they are being bullied, asking them for help, asking questions in class)</li> <li>○ Telling another something</li> <li>○ Daily announcements</li> <li>○ Reminders</li> <li>○ Advertising PBIS (e.g., through t-shirts)</li> <li>○ Posting expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussing and sharing information about PBIS systems and practices (including going to trainings and then training staff)</li> <li>• Motivation for communicating or not communicating</li> <li>• Language used (<i>for common language, see culture &amp; climate</i>)</li> <li>• Feeling one is able to speak openly with others</li> </ul>
6	Beliefs & Attitudes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal or perception of others' philosophy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The philosophy that it is one's responsibility to support students in behaving appropriately as opposed to believing that when a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<p>student misbehaves that the administration or someone else should deal with the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Philosophy that adults in the school are responsible for addressing the social-emotional needs of the students</li> <li>○ Preventative versus reactive philosophy</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Personal or perception of others' values and "shoulds" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having a sense of the views of others</li> <li>○ Personal perception regarding what students are learning from home and society and what they should be learning from home and society</li> <li>○ Beliefs about who should be able to participate in celebrations</li> <li>○ Beliefs about who should teach expectations</li> <li>○ Beliefs about how students should behave</li> <li>○ Beliefs about oneself, Self-esteem/self-confidence</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Students' perceptions of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fairness</li> <li>○ Of adults (e.g., they are nice and understanding, available to help)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Understanding and accepting others who are from diverse backgrounds</li> </ul>
7	Buy-in & Engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acceptance/support of systems and practices (e.g., liking acknowledgments, liking expectations, not wanting consequences) or lack thereof <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not accepting systems and practices due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being "stuck in one's ways"</li> <li>▪ Feeling that PBIS is just "one-more thing" on a teacher/staff member's plate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Desire to participate in practices, such as celebrations or teaching of</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cool tools               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Student participation (e.g., students' active engagement in class, games, and activities)</li> <li>○ Entire school participation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• References to "buy-in," "buy in," or "buy into"</li> <li>• Engagement in school               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wanting to come to school</li> <li>○ Caring about success in school</li> <li>○ Caring about school in general</li> <li>○ Liking the school and/or classes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8	Knowledge & Experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Years one has been with the school</li> <li>• Years one has been in the field of education</li> <li>• Years of experience one has with PBIS</li> <li>• Training one received (including when training occurred)</li> <li>• Training in general</li> <li>• Understanding of PBIS in general</li> <li>• Understanding of PBIS systems (e.g., school-wide structures and policies), practices (e.g., acknowledgement, expectations, and consequences), and goals (e.g., desired outcomes)</li> </ul> <p><i>Can apply to oneself or others.</i></p>
9	Climate & Culture		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Feeling secure when walking through halls                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers being visible and providing supervision (e.g., being out in hallways)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Person and property feeling secure</li> <li>○ Students feeling that there is a trusted adult they can go to for support</li> <li>○ Students feeling that it is safe to communicate to an adult if they are being bullied</li> <li>○ The presence of a cop</li> <li>○ Catching and stopping bullying</li> </ul> </li> <li>• School as a whole               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Feeling emotionally connected to school</li> <li>○ References to the environment of</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<p>the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ References to a school-wide focus on the positive</li> <li>○ Philosophy, approach, and values of the <i>school as a whole</i></li> <li>○ The school's <i>common language</i></li> <li>○ The school holding students being held to high expectations</li> <li>○ Working together as if a community</li> </ul>
10	Behavior		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having difficulty controlling behavior or having self-control</li> <li>● Not taking responsibility for actions or taking responsibility for actions</li> <li>● Motivation for behavior that is not relational in nature (see relationships, such as               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not wanting to get in trouble</li> <li>○ Not wanting to get yelled at</li> <li>○ Not wanting to get picked on</li> <li>○ Wanting attention</li> <li>○ Thinking it is fun to misbehave</li> </ul> </li> <li>● How one deals with student behavior, such as               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Providing a consequence versus problem-solving</li> <li>○ Encouraging reflection</li> <li>○ Talking through the misbehavior with the student</li> <li>○ Sending the student out for someone else to deal with</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10a		Negative Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Arguing with teachers</li> <li>● Yelling at each other</li> <li>● Leaving garbage in the hallway</li> <li>● Fighting</li> <li>● Not turning in homework</li> <li>● Tardiness</li> <li>● Defacing property</li> <li>● Breaking the rules</li> <li>● Not helping out</li> <li>● Choosing not to use self-control or do the right thing</li> <li>● Not trying hard in school</li> <li>● Not bringing books home, turning in homework, taking notes in class</li> </ul>

10b		Positive Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping others</li> <li>• Being responsible</li> <li>• Being nice</li> <li>• Respecting others</li> <li>• Trying hard in school</li> <li>• Bringing books home, turning in homework, taking notes in class</li> <li>• On-task behavior</li> <li>• Modeling appropriate behavior</li> </ul>
10c		Bullying/ Relational Aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gossiping about each other</li> <li>• Making fun of other kids</li> <li>• Pushing other kids around</li> <li>• Picking on each other</li> <li>• Any mention of “bullying”</li> </ul>
11	Relationships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions – how students and staff interact</li> <li>• Peers (e.g., friends, desiring friends)</li> <li>• Getting along with others (or the opposite)</li> <li>• Hurt feelings</li> <li>• Interpersonal liking and desiring others to like them</li> <li>• Mutual respect (as opposed to just being nice or respectful to somebody, this is two-way as opposed to one-way)</li> <li>• Feeling of regard from others</li> <li>• Building of trust</li> <li>• Students liking teachers and students feeling that teachers like students</li> </ul>
12	Academics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student understanding of material</li> <li>• Grades</li> <li>• Teaching and learning of content in the classroom</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Teachable time</li> </ul>
13	Influences & Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandates</li> <li>• Support from the IL PBIS network</li> <li>• What other schools are doing</li> <li>• Grants and money from outside resources</li> <li>• Structure of school in terms of the amount time students attend the school (students</li> </ul>

			<p>are only there for two years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of the students, community, and staff</li> <li>• Student development factors (e.g., the way students of this age group “are”)</li> <li>• Parents and community</li> </ul> <p><i>External factors that are not under the control of the school or characteristics that aren't changeable</i></p> <p><i>External resources</i></p>
--	--	--	--

APPENDIX H  
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Green Team	The school team that directs implementation of SWPBS at the universal level
Boot Camp	The process of teaching the expectations matrix to students during the first few days of school. Students visit each area of the building and learn how the expectations apply to that area.
Wildcat Ways Core Values Common Language Matrix	The school-wide expectations, which are: be safe, be responsible, be respectful  A table that defines how the wildcat ways apply to multiple areas in the school by listing three to five rules for each expectation in each location
Kick-off	A school-wide event at the beginning of each quarter where the matrix is reviewed
Cool Tool	A lesson plan taught during one period of a day (40 minutes) by each teacher in each classroom that addresses a specific aspect of a wildcat way
ODR	An Office Discipline Referral is a referral to principal's office that is written for a major behavioral infraction. It includes the following information: the student's and the referring staff member's identity, the behavioral infraction, the date, location, and time of day the infraction occurred, who else was involved in the infraction, and the possible motivation for the infraction.
SWIS	School-Wide Information System, SWIS™, (ECS, © 2010) is a behavioral infraction database
Gotcha	A high frequency acknowledgement. A paper ticket given to a student for following a wildcat way that can be entered into a raffle for a prize. The raffles are divided by grade level and the prize is usually a \$5 gift certificate.
Celebration	An intermediate frequency acknowledgement. A school-wide activity that takes place over two periods at the end of a quarter if students are under a threshold for ODRs for a particular behavior
State Network	A positive behavior support technical assistance network that provides positive behavior support training and coaching for schools and districts throughout the state.



## REFERENCES

- Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (1997). Toward a scale-up model for replicating new approaches to schooling. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 8, 197-230.
- Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2003). On sustainability of project innovations as systemic change. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 14, 1-25.
- Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2007). Systemic change for school improvement. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17, 55-77.
- Alkin, M. C., Christie, C. A. (2004). An evaluation theory tree. In M. C. Alkin, *Evaluation roots: Tracing theorists' views and influence* (pp. 12-65). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Arredondo, P., & Perez, P. (2003). Expanding multicultural competence through social justice leadership. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 31, 282-289. doi:10.1177/0011000003253155
- Ballard-Krishnan, S. A., McClure, L., Schmatz, B., Travnika, B., Friedrich, G., & Nolan, M. (2003). The Michigan PBS initiative: Advancing the spirit of collaboration by including parents in the delivery of personnel development opportunities. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 5, 122-126.
- Bambara, L. M., Nonnemacher, S., & Kern, L. (2009). Sustaining school-based individualized positive behavior support: Perceived barriers and enablers. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11, 161-176. doi: 10.1177/1098300708330878
- Battistich, V., & Hom, A. (1997). The relationship between students' sense of their school as a community and their involvement in problem behaviors. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87, 1997-2002.
- Bear, G. G. (2010). *School discipline and self-discipline: A practical guide to promoting prosocial student behavior*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Bear, G. G., Manning, M. A., & Izard, C. (2003). Responsible behavior: The importance of social cognition and emotion. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18, 140-157.

- Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Carney, K. L., Minnis-Kim, M. J., Anderson-Harriss, S., Moroz, K. B., Pigott, T. D. (2006). Schoolwide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: A case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8, 131-145.
- Bradley-Johnson, S., & Dean, V. J. (2000). Role change for school psychology: The challenge continues in the new millennium. *Psychology in the Schools*, 37, 1-5.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Sawyer, A. L., & O'Brennan, L. M. (2007). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review*, 36, 361-382.
- Brown, S. L., Birch, D. A., & Kancherla, V. (2005). Bullying perspectives: Experiences, attitudes, and recommendations of 9- to 13-year-olds attending health education centers in the United States. *Journal of School Health*, 75, 384-392.
- Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., & Macguire, P. (2009). Why action research? *Action Research*, 1, 9-28. doi: 10.1177/14767503030011002
- Cambron-McCabe, N., & McCarthy, M. M. (2005). Educating school leaders for social justice. *Educational Policy*, 19, 201-222. doi: 10.1177/0895904804271609
- Cappella, E., Reinke, W. M., & Hoagwood, K. E. (2001). Advancing intervention research in school psychology: Finding the balance between process and outcome for social and behavioral interventions. *School Psychology Review*, 40, 455-464.
- Carr, E. G. (2007). The expanding vision of positive behavior support: Research perspectives on happiness, helpfulness, hopefulness. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 9, 3-14.
- Cohen, R., Kincaid, D., & Childs, K. E. (2007). Measuring school-wide positive behavior support implementation: Development and validation of the benchmarks of quality. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 9, 203-213.
- Conoley, J. C., & Gutkin, T. B. (1995). Why didn't--why doesn't--school psychology realize its promise? *Journal of School Psychology*, 33, 209-17.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Decker, D. M., Dona, D. P., & Christenson, S. L. (2007). Behaviorally at-risk African American students: The importance of student-teacher relationships for student outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45, 83-109. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.004

- Doolittle, J. H. (2006). Sustainability of positive behavior supports in schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon.
- Educational and Community Supports. (n.d.). *Positive Behavior Supports Surveys*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbssurveys.org>
- Ervin, R. A., Schaughency, E., Goodman, S. D., McGlinchey, M. T., & Matthews, A. (2006). Merging research and practice agendas to address reading and behavior school-wide. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 198-223.
- Ervin, R. A., Schaughency, E., Matthews, A., Goodman, S. D., & McGlinchey, M. T. (2007). Primary and secondary prevention of behavior difficulties: Developing a data-informed problem-solving model to guide decision making at a school-wide level. *Psychology in the Schools, 44*, 7-18. doi: 10.1002/pits.20201
- Evans, S. D., Hanlin, C. E., & Prilleltensky, I. (2007). Blending ameliorative and transformative approaches in human service organizations: A case-study. *Journal of Community Psychology, 35*, 329-346. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20151
- Fenning, P., Briggs, A., McArdle, L., Their, K., Flannery, B., Doren, B., & Hicks, K. (in preparation). A qualitative study of key high school stakeholders perceptions of buy-in to schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS). Manuscript to be re-submitted to the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*.
- Flannery, K. B., Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. M. (2009). School-wide positive behavior support in high school: Early lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*, 177-185. doi: 10.1177/1098300708316257
- Friedman, R. M. (2003). Improving outcomes for students through the application of a public health model to school psychology: A commentary. *Journal of School Psychology, 41*, 69-75. doi: 10.1016/S0022-4405(02)00145-0
- Glanville, J. L., & Wildhagen, T. (2007). The measurement of school engagement: Assessing dimensionality and measurement invariance across race and ethnicity. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 67*, 1019-1041. doi:10.1177/0013164406299126
- Graczyk, P. A., Domitrovich, C. E., Small, M., & Zins, J. E. (2006). Serving all children: An implementation model framework. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 266-274.
- Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010) A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 946-955. doi: 10.1037/a0017935

- Griffiths, M. (1998). The discourses of social justice in schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 24, 301-316.
- Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). Early teacher-child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development*, 72, 625-638.
- Hamre, B. K., Pianta, R. C., Downer, J. T., & Mashburn, A. J. (2007). Teachers' Perceptions of Conflict with Young Students : Looking beyond Problem Behaviors. *Social Development*, 17, 115-136. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00418.x
- Hill, C. E., Thompson, B. J., & Williams, E. N. (1997). A guide to conducting consensual qualitative research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 25, 517-572. doi:10.1177/0011000097254001
- Horner, R. H., Todd, A. W., Lewis-Palmer, T., Irvin, L. K., Sugai, G., & Boland, J. B. (2004). The school-wide evaluation tool (SET): A research instrument for assessing school-wide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 6, 3-12.
- Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Todd, A. W., & Lewis-Palmer, T. (2005). School-wide positive behavior support: An alternative approach to discipline in schools. In L. Bambara, & L. Kern (Eds.). *Positive behavior support* (pp. 359-390). New York: Guilford Press.
- Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Eber, L., Nakasato, J., Todd, A. W., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A randomized, wait-list controlled effectiveness trial assessing school-wide positive behavior support in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11, 133-144. doi:10.1177/1098300709332067
- Hughes, J., & Kwok, O. (2007). Influence of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, 39-51. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.39
- Hughes, J. N., Luo, W., Kwok, O., & Loyd, L. K. (2008). Teacher-student support, effortful engagement, and achievement: A 3-Year longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 1-14. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.100.1.1
- Irvin, L. K., Horner, R. H., Ingram, K., Todd, A. W. Sugai, G., Sampson, N. K., & Boland, J. B. (2006). Using office discipline referral data for decision making

about student behavior in elementary and middle schools: An empirical evaluation of validity. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions*, 8, 10-23.

- Kazdin, A. E. (2008). Evidence-based treatment and practice: New opportunities to bridge clinical research and practice, enhance the knowledge base, and improve patient care. *The American Psychologist*, 3, 146-159. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.63.3.146
- Kincaid, D., Childs, K., Blase, K. A., & Wallace, F. (2007). Identifying barriers and facilitators in implementing schoolwide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 9, 174-184.
- Krueger, R. (1995). The future of focus groups. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, 524-530. doi:10.1177/104973239500500412
- Lassen, S. R., Steele, M. M., & Sailor, W. (2006). The relationship of school-wide positive behavior support to academic achievement in an urban middle school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43, 701-712. doi:10.1002/pits.20177
- LeBlanc, L., Swisher, R., Vitaro, F., & Tremblay, R. E. (2008). High school social climate and antisocial behavior: A 10 year longitudinal and multilevel study. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18, 395-419.
- Lewis, T. J., & Sugai, G. (1999). Effective behavior support: A systems approach to proactive school-wide management. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 31, 1-24.
- Li, Y., Lerner, J. V., & Lerner, R. M. (2010). Personal and ecological assets and academic competence in early adolescence: The mediating role of school engagement. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 39, 801-815. doi:10.1007/s10964-010-9535-4
- McIntosh, K., Horner, R. H., & Sugai, G. (2009). Sustainability of systems-level evidence-based practices in schools: Current knowledge and future directions. In W. Sailor, G. Dunlap, G. Sugai, & R. H. Horner (Eds.), *Handbook of positive behavior support* (pp. 327-352). New York: Springer.
- McIntosh, K., MacKay, L. D., Hume, A. E., Doolittle, J., Vincent, C. G., Horner, R. H., & Ervin, R. A. (2010). Development and initial validation of a measure to assess factors related to sustainability of school-wide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 13, 208-213. doi: 10.1177/1098300710385348
- Merrell, K. W., & Buchanan, R. (2006). Intervention selection in school-based practice: Using public health models to enhance systems capacity of schools. *School Psychology Review*, 35, 167-180.

- Merrell, K. W., Ervin, R. A., & Gimpel, G. A. (2006). *School psychology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Foundations and practices*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Minke, K. M., & Anderson, K. J. (2005). Family-school collaboration and positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 7, 181-185.
- Murray, C. (2009). Parent and teacher relationships as predictors of school engagement and functioning among low-income urban youth. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 29(3), 376-404. doi:10.1177/0272431608322940
- Muscott, H. S., Szczesiul, S., Berk, B., Staub, K., Hoover, J., & Paula, P. (2008). Creating home-school partnerships by engaging families in schoolwide positive behavior supports. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40, 6-14.
- Muscott, H. S., Mann, E. L., & Lebrun, M. R. (2008). Positive behavioral interventions and supports in New Hampshire: Effects of large-Scale implementation of schoolwide positive behavior support on student discipline and academic achievement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 10, 190-205. doi:10.1177/1098300708316258
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2010a). *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*. Retrieved from: [http://www.nasponline.org/standards/2010standards/2\\_PracticeModel.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/standards/2010standards/2_PracticeModel.pdf).
- National Center on Response to Intervention. (2010, April). *Essential components of RTI: A closer look at response to intervention*. Retrieved from: [http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents\\_042710.pdf](http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf)
- Nastasi, B. K. (2000). School psychologists as health-care providers in the 21st century: Conceptual framework, professional identity, and professional practice. *School Psychology Review*, 29, 540-554.
- Nastasi, B. K. (2004). Meeting the challenges of the future: Integrating public health and public education for mental health promotion. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 15, 295-312.
- Noell, G. H., & Gansle, K. A. (2009). Moving from good ideas in educational systems change to sustainable program implementation: Coming to terms with some of the realities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46, 79-89. doi:10.1002/pits.20355

- North, C. (2006). More than words? Delving into the substantive meanings of “social justice” in education. *Review of Educational Research*, 76, 507-535.
- Office of Special Education Programs. (2010). Positive behavior support: Implementers’ blueprint and self-assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.pbis.org>
- Perdue, N. H., Manzeske, D. P., & Estell, D. B. (2009). Early predictors of school engagement: exploring the role of peer relationships. *Psychology*, 46, 1084-1097. doi:10.1002/pits.20446
- Pergolizzi, F., Richmond, D., Macario, S., Gan, Z., Richmond, C., & Macario, E. (2009). Bullying in middle schools: Results from a four-school survey. *Journal of School Violence*, 8, 264-279. doi: 10.1080/15388220902910839
- Power, T. J. (2000). Commentary: The school psychologist as community-focused, public health professional: Emerging challenges and implications for training. *School Psychology Review*, 29, 557-559.
- Prilleltensky, I. (2001). Value-based praxis in community psychology: Moving toward social justice and social action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29, 747-778
- Prilleltensky, I. (2005). Promoting well-being: Time for a paradigm shift in health and human services. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 33, 53-60. doi:10.1080/14034950510033381
- Prilleltensky, I., & Nelson, G. (2002). *Doing psychology critically: Making a difference in diverse settings*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Prilleltensky, I., Peirson, L., & Nelson, G. (1997). The application of community psychology values and guiding concepts to school consultation. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 8, 153-173.
- Reschly, D. J., & Bergstrom, M. K. (2009). Response to intervention. In T. B. Gutkin & C. R. Reynolds (Eds.), *Handbook of school psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 434-460). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Ripski, M. B., & Gregory, A. (2009). Unfair, unsafe, and unwelcome: Do high school students' perceptions of unfairness, hostility, and victimization in school predict engagement and achievement? *Journal of School Violence*, 8, 335-375.
- Rogers, M. R., & O’Byron, E. C. (2008). Advocating for social justice: The context for change in school psychology. *School Psychology Review*, 37, 493-498.

- Sailor, W., Zuna, N., Choi, J., Thomas, J., McCart, A., & Roger, B. (2006). Anchoring schoolwide positive behavior support in structural school reform. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31, 18-31.
- Sarason, S. B. (1996). *Revisiting "the culture of the school and the problem of change."* New York: Teachers College Press.
- School-Wide Information System. Educational and Community Supports. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.swis.org/>
- Scott, T. M., & Barrett, S. B. (2004). Using staff and student time engaged in disciplinary procedures to evaluate the impact of school-wide PBS. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 6, 21-27.
- Sebanc, A. M. (2003). The friendship features of preschool children: Links with prosocial behavior and aggression. *Social Development*, 12, 249-268.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sheridan, S. M., & Gutkin, T. B. (2000). The ecology of school psychology: Examining and changing our paradigm for the 21st century. *School Psychology Review*, 29, 485-502.
- Shinn, M. (2008). Best practices in using curriculum-based measurement in a problem-solving model. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 243-262). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Shoho, A. R., Merchant, B. M., & Lugg, C. A. (2007). Social justice: Seeking a common language. In F. W. English (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of educational leadership: Advances in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 47-67). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Shriberg, D., Wynne, M., Briggs, A., Bartucci, G., Lombardo, A. C. (2011). School psychologists' perspectives on social justice. *School Psychology Forum*, 5(2), 37-53.
- Shriberg, D., Bonner, M., Sarr, B. J., Walker, A. M., Hyland, M., & Chester, C. (2008). Social justice through a school psychology lens: Definitions and applications. *School Psychology Review*, 37, 453-468.
- Siegel, S., & Castellan, N. J., Jr. (1998). *Nonparametric statistics for the behavioral sciences*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.



- Simonsen, B., Eber, L., Black, A. C., Sugain, G., Lewandowski, H., Sims, B., & Myers, D. (2012). Illinois statewide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Evolution and impact on student outcomes across years. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 14, 5-16. doi: 10.1177/1098300711412601
- Spaulding, S. A., Irvin, L. K., Horner, R. H., May, S. L., Emeldi, M., Tobin, T. J., & Sugai, G. (2010). Schoolwide social-behavioral climate, student problem behavior, and related administrative decisions: Empirical patterns from 1,510 schools nationwide. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12, 69-85. doi:10.1177/1098300708329011
- Speight, S. L., & Vera, E. M. (2009). The challenge of social justice for school psychology. *Journal of educational and Psychological Consultation*, 19, 82-92. doi:10.1080/10474410802463338
- Stollar, S. A., Poth, R. L., Curtis, M. J., & Cohen, R. M. (2006). Collaborative strategic planning as illustration of the principles of systems change. *School Psychology Review*, 35, 181-197.
- Sprague, J., Colvin, G., & Irvin, L. (1996). *The Oregon School Safety Survey*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.
- Sprague, J., Colvin, G., & Irvin, L. (2002). *School Safety Survey version 2.0*. The Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, University of Oregon College of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.pbssurveys.org/pages/Home.aspx>
- Strein, W., Hoagwood, K., & Cohn, A. (2003). School psychology: A public health perspective: I. Prevention, populations, and systems change. *Journal of School Psychology*, 41, 23-38.
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 24, 23-50.
- Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, T., Nelson, C., & Wilcox, B. (2000). Applying positive behavioral support and functional behavior assessment in the schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2, 131-143.
- Thomas, A., & Grimes, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Best practices in school psychology IV*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Thomas, A., & Grimes, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Best practices in school psychology V*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

- Turnbull, A., Edmonson, H., Griggs, P., Wickham, D., Sailor, W., Freeman, R., & Bull, J. W. (2002). A blueprint for schoolwide positive behavior support: Implementation of three components. *Exceptional Children*, 68, 377-402.
- U.S. Department Institute for Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/>
- Utley, C. A., Kozleski, E., Smith, A., & Draper, I. L. (2002). Positive behavior support: A proactive strategy for minimizing behavior problems in urban multicultural youth. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 4, 196-207.
- Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology: Expanding our roles. *Counseling Psychologist*, 31, 253-271.
- Vincent, C. G., Randall, C., Cartledge, G., Tobin, T. J., Swain-Bradway, J. (2011). Toward a conceptual integration of cultural responsiveness and schoolwide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 13, 219-229. doi: 10.1177/1098300711399765
- Vincent, C. G., & Tobin, T. J. (2011). The relationship between implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) and disciplinary exclusion of students from various ethnic backgrounds with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 19, 217-232. doi:10.1177/1063426610377329
- Warren, J. S., Edmonson, H. M., Griggs, P., Lassen, S. R., McCart, A., Turnbull, A., & Sailor, W. (2003). Urban applications of school-wide positive behavior support: Critical issues and lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions*, 5, 80-91.
- Warren, J. S., Bohanon-Edmonson, H. M., Turnbull, A. P., Sailor, W., Wickham, D., Griggs, P., et al. (2006). School-wide positive behavior support: Addressing behavior problems that impede student learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18, 187-198. doi:10.1007/s10648-006-9008-1
- Weist, M. (2003). Challenges and opportunities in moving toward a public health approach in school mental health. *Journal of School Psychology*, 41, 77-82. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(02)00146-2
- Ysseldyke, J., Burns, M., Dawson, P., Kelly, B., Morrison, D., Ortiz, S., & Telzrow, C. (2006). *School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice III*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Retrieved from: <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/blueprint/index.aspx>

## VITA

Alissa Briggs earned her doctoral degree in school psychology from Loyola University Chicago. She recently completed an Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Candidates (APPIC) accredited internship at Highland Park High School in Highland Park, Illinois. Prior to entering her internship year, she served as a research assistant for the Center for School Evaluation, Intervention, and Training (CSEIT), where she researched the process of developing, implementing, and sustaining schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) in high schools. Alissa's research interests relate to examining the ways in which social justice can be applied to the field of school psychology. She is also interested in examining the impact of SWPBS on children's social, emotional, and academic health. She has presented and published on research in these areas.